

We can imagine the books we'd like to read, even if they have not yet been written, and we can imagine libraries full of books we would like to possess, even if they are well beyond our reach, because we enjoy dreaming up a library that reflects every one of our interests and every one of our foibles - a library that, in its variety and complexity, fully reflects the reader we are. It is therefore not unreasonable to suppose that, in a similar fashion, the identity of a society, or a national identity, can be mirrored by a library, by an assembly of titles that, practically and symbolically, serves as our collective definition.¹

The collections and services of libraries and related agencies, such as museums and archives, are important components of social and institutional memory. They are both physical places of intellectual work and highly symbolic places. They represent national and cultural identity and aspirations.²

What a nation thinks, that it is. And what a nation thinks is for the most part what it reads. Investigations into social and political conditions are a mark of the time; they are many and elaborate but social and political conditions are largely determined by what is taking place in the imaginative life of the community.³

¹ A Manguel, *The library at night*, Toronto, 2006, p. 294.

² WB Rayward and C Jenkins, 'Libraries in times of war, revolution, and social change', *Library Trends*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2007, p. 361.

³ LS Jast, *Libraries and living: essays and addresses of a public librarian*, [s.l.], 1932, p. 142. Jast's observations are remarkably pre-emptive of Benedict Anderson's seminal thesis on the role of print dissemination in the creation of national identities. See BR Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London; New York, 1991.

INTRODUCTION

This thesis aims to historicise the formation of local and national collections of material relating directly to the locality in the major ‘state’ public libraries in Australia, from the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century. It documents and analyses changing attitudes to local and national literature and historical material, situating the institution’s growing desire to collect and promote its cultural and social history within changes in its coeval society, focusing on cultural shifts in nationalism and patriotism, historical consciousness and attitudes to the production of history, and the promotion of national literary culture. The thesis finds that, although the major public libraries were typically not active in acquiring an ‘archive’ of the locality when first formed, by the mid twentieth century they had all established and naturalised an active ‘archival’ function. Nevertheless, as this thesis argues, the evolution of this function was complex, influenced variously by factors such as the degree and type of cultural philanthropic activity in the wider community, historical ‘amnesia’ toward the colonial convict past, and residual ‘cultural cringe’ toward Australian literary production. This thesis emerges from the conviction that a close examination of the formation and stratification of library collections that symbolise and promote national identity contributes valuable information about emerging and changing ‘worldviews’ of communities, particularly the ways in which communities identify as members of a region and nation. Utilising the lens of public library philosophy and collections, the thesis offers a new way of reflecting on the formation of local and national identities in Australia.

This thesis is primarily situated in the field of library history. Library history is a discipline that investigates the forces emerging from society that inhibit, promote or direct library development, and the ways in which libraries concurrently influence their communities. Library historian Michael Harris has described three principal areas of investigation into library provision commonly undertaken by library historians.⁴ These include *control* (libraries being ‘deployed by dominant

⁴ MH Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, Metuchen, N.J., 1995, p. 4.

and powerful classes in society in an attempt to represent the world in ways that serve their interests'), *commodity* (libraries as 'specialized markets for written and printed materials), and *memory* (libraries consolidating a 'desired sense of national identity', and providing a resource for the production and promotion of 'cultural heritage').⁵ This thesis engages primarily with Harris' 'memory' function. In library history, this field of enquiry is one that is relatively underdeveloped, and one that has not been treated to any extent in Australian library historiography.

Libraries are frequently conceived as places in which identity is located, as receptacles of collective memory and representatives of cultural 'worldviews'.⁶ They are seen as repositories for safe-keeping the material remains of the past that, as Martin Stuart-Fox suggests, 'possess an intrinsic value for our understanding not just of the world, but of ourselves as well'.⁷ In Australia, historical scholarship typically characterizes the principal public reference libraries established in the colonial period as popular 'memory-banks', and as institutionalized locations of history, contributing to the identificatory struggles of the new nation.⁸ Australian historian Bain Attwood writes that with the rising patriotic sentiment in the Australian colonies in the last decades of the nineteenth century, '[m]onuments and memorials, libraries and the like, were to be created as statements to posterity and would function as the new bearers of the past for the settler nation'.⁹ Marilyn Lake writes in the introduction to a key text exploring history and memory in Australia, *Memory, monuments and museums: the past in the present*, that Australian libraries and museums are 'repositories of public

⁵ Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, pp. 5-7.

⁶ Rayward and Jenkins, 'Libraries in times of war, revolution, and social change', p. 361.

⁷ M Stuart-Fox, 'Two views of the history of historiography and the nature of history', *History Australia*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2007, p. 44.13.

⁸ See for example, Australian historian Penny Russell, who writes that 'through their efforts to 'demarcate and order society, through their making of stories of "nation" and the egalitarian national character', colonial Australians 'enacted rituals of belonging': 'Making nation they made identity, in and through history. Making history they secured a sense of past and therefore a sense of continued presence and a grounded present': PA Russell, 'Unsettling settler society', in *Australia's history: themes and debates*, Sydney, NSW, 2005, p. 38.

⁹ B Attwood and H Doyle, *Possession: Batman's treaty and the matter of history*, Carlton, Vic., 2009, p. 134.

memory', institutions marking the transition 'from the *milieu de mémoire* of pre-modern times to the *lieu de mémoire* instituted by nation states'.¹⁰

The generally agreed formulation that the major Australian reference libraries played a role in 'making nation' through their historical collections has not been critically examined.¹¹ How did libraries perform this role in philosophical, professional and practical terms? How and when did this institutional 'vocation' (in Wallace Kirsop's term¹²) become naturalised as a central element of the major reference libraries? What were the social stimuli for origination, retardation, and development of this function? Was it difficult, or contested? How did widely held social and cultural perceptions of local and national history, and of the relationship of the colonies with the metropolis, affect the acquisition of the local archive? These questions, from which this thesis emerges, reflect a gap in the historiography of public libraries. They offer directions for a critique of the accepted 'national heritage' function of the major public libraries in Australia, and for new insights into nation-making and the construction of identity.

Eminent Australian book historian Wallace Kirsop has warned against parochial studies of Australian book and library history that present Europe and Australia as a 'dichotomy'.¹³ He argues that nationalistic interest in local literature was a 'broadly-based' international trend, with parallels in Americana and the 'long-standing bibliophilic traditions encompassing topography and voyages'. He

¹⁰ M Lake, 'Introduction: the past in the present', in M Lake (ed.), *Memory, monuments and museums: the past in the present*, Carlton, Vic., 2006, pp. 1-2.

¹¹ Exceptions to this are two papers in Australian library history: J Sassoon, 'Phantoms of remembrance: libraries and archives as "the collective memory"', *Public History Review*, vol. 10, 2003, pp. 40-60, an outstanding theoretical analysis of the ways in which archive formation is dictated by local amnesia; B Tiffen, 'Recording the nation: nationalism and the history of the National Library of Australia', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, pp. 342-59, in which the author seeks to explore how libraries can be utilised 'to signify national characteristics and reflect "official" messages of nationhood' (p. 344); and M Piggott, 'Archives and memory', in SM McKemmish (ed.), *Archives: recordkeeping in society*, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2005, pp. 299-327, which deals only peripherally with libraries but makes important arguments. Wallace Kirsop summarised the problematics of the growth of bibliographic Australiana collecting (private and institutional): W Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia: individuals and libraries', in BW Rayward (ed.), *Australian library history in context: papers for the third Forum on Australian Library History, University of New South Wales, July 17 and 18, 1987*, Sydney, 1988, pp. 75-84.

¹² Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia', p. 80.

¹³ Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia', p. 81.

rightly argues that interest in Australiana enlarged the scope of public library activity in Australia, but did not displace other literary or bibliographic purposes. Librarians worked across traditional northern hemisphere collecting practices, *and* those of Australasia, '[transferring] techniques from one to the other'.¹⁴ This thesis does not argue that the national project was the only course upon which the Australian public library set itself. The underlying discourse of library provision in the liberal model established in Great Britain, which enshrined utility and provision of educational and moral literature, remained fundamental in the colonies. The search for universality (in Enlightenment terms) in 'national' collections was a primary goal. However, the emerging will to archive the particularities of the Australian nation and its component states became a synchronous and significant practice.

The thesis aims to articulate this activity in the public library in Australia as a 'spatialised history', a history that takes proper account of geographical factors. This spatial discourse allows that the 'will to archive' in the Australian public library operated in the way it did over the time period because of the contiguity of geography and history, a product of the opposition between the metropolis and the periphery in a relationship defined by a perception of cultural, aesthetic, and historical 'want'. Geographical factors related to metropolis and periphery are further analysed through an investigation of the effect of immediate locale on specific institutions, which reflect the very real 'place-consciousness' emerging from a particular history and space.¹⁵ This regional approach, exemplified in the thesis by a deeper investigation into a particular institution, the Tasmanian Public Library, offers an alternative and parallel to the wider examination of nation-making across the Australian public library.¹⁶ The wide view that takes in the

¹⁴ Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia', p. 81.

¹⁵ The concept of a 'world literary space' in which to conceive national literatures (and the opposition between the metropolis and its peripheries) articulated by Pascale Casanova is usefully translated to the 'space' of the public library. See P Casanova, *The world republic of letters*, Cambridge, MA, 2004, especially Ch. 3. I am grateful to Philip Mead for directing me to this work.

¹⁶ For a parallel to this approach in literary history, see also P Mead, 'Nation, literature, location', in P Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2009, pp. 549-67. Mead observes that recent 'post-national' Australian literary studies have moved both to

large-scale trajectory of state library development over a century is complemented in the thesis by the close view, which seeks to illuminate the complexities of identity formation and changing historical consciousness in focused case studies. Close analyses include the psychology and social role of patriotic collecting and philanthropy in a case study of Tasmanian bibliophile William Walker; the influence of the penal past on local collection formation in a case study of the life cycle of the Tasmanian incunabulum *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* by convict author Henry Savery; and the evolution of attitudes to national fictions in the public library in the context of changing degrees of literary nationalism.

Scope of the study

Colonial Australians sought, in Patrick Buckridge's words, to 'reproduce the contexts and conditions of Old World book-reading' in their new environment.¹⁷ The colonies (and later, states) were served by a variety of library types, derived from a variety of British models including parish and church libraries, Mechanics' Institute libraries, associational libraries, Royal Society and parliamentary libraries.¹⁸ The model that the earliest settlers brought with them predated Edward Edwards' and William Ewart's English free public library model. The major 'state' libraries that emerged in each of the colonial (later 'state') capitals from the 1850s onwards were a direct product of the English liberal public library model, built to promote moral guidance, transmit liberal culture, and provide utilitarian support for a developing society.

The Melbourne Public Library in the colony of Victoria was the first state-supported library in Australia, established in 1853 in conjunction with an art gallery and museum, and opened to the public in 1856.¹⁹ The construction of these conjoined institutions was largely driven by local judge Redmond Barry, who held an 'unrivalled position in shaping libraries and the resources for intellectual

'transcultural comparisons and contexts' and 'rereadings of the local'. This work privileges 'place consciousness' in the 'matrix of literature, nation and place' (p. 551).

¹⁷ P Buckridge, 'Bookishness and Australian literature', *Script & Print*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2006, p. 232.

¹⁸ GD Richardson, *The colony's quest for a national library*, Sydney, 1960, p. 4.

¹⁹ DJ Jones, 'Public Libraries: Institutions of the highest educational value', in M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, p. 158.

culture in Victoria after the gold rush'.²⁰ Barry travelled extensively during the 1860s and 1870s in Europe and in North America, visiting many different types of libraries and gaining first-hand knowledge of the capacity of such institutions to deliver specific cultural goals.²¹ Barry was strongly drawn to liberal principles of library delivery; these were evident in his vision of 'free access' to all members of the population, and an awareness of the self-disciplinary and panoptic potential of the library as a public space, in his emphasis on appropriate dress and conduct for public library users.²² The colony of New South Wales followed the success of the Melbourne Public Library when it established the Free Public Library (renamed the 'Public Library of New South Wales' in 1895) in Sydney in 1869. The other colonies established their own state-funded free libraries over the next four decades.

As Michael Roe has observed, 'culture' such as the public library promoted was ascribed in the period with a 'unique power to dissolve the ills which beset Australia's development',²³ as it emerged from penal origins and sought to overcome the 'tyranny of distance'.²⁴ The free libraries were 'one of the most potent agents for mental improvement' available to colonial society, particularly for adults.²⁵ They also provided an invaluable source of information and current news to settlers and new emigrants, ideally acting (as a Tasmanian newspaper observed in 1869) as a first 'resort of the Colonists on their arrival in their metropolis'.²⁶ By the time of the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901, there were 407 metropolitan and regional libraries across the nation fully supported, or subsidized by the government.²⁷

²⁰ W Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and libraries', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 73, 2004, p. 56.

²¹ Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and libraries', p. 55.

²² Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and libraries', p. 62.

²³ M Roe, *Quest for authority in eastern Australia, 1835-1851*, Parkville, Vic., 1965, p. 150.

²⁴ Geoffrey Blainey evoked this concept in his now classic account of the effect of distance from the metropolis on the development of Australian society and culture. See G Blainey, *The tyranny of distance: how distance shaped Australia's history*, Melbourne, 1966 (first edition).

²⁵ J Gascoigne, *The enlightenment and the origins of European Australia*, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2002, p. 118.

²⁶ Editorial, *Mercury* (Hobart), 23 June 1869, p. 2.

²⁷ P Biskup and DM Goodman, *Libraries in Australia*, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 1994, p. 81.

Concurrently, the flourishing Mechanics' Institutes and Schools of Arts formed subscription libraries, partially supported by government, and served the dispersed populations in regional and rural areas, providing a more 'popular' stock with a high proportion of fiction. There were some 2000 of these subscription libraries by the 1890s.²⁸ Fully commercial circulating libraries were very successful and widespread from the 1920s through until the 1960s, peaking in the 1930s and 1940s.²⁹ These provided predominantly light fiction to suburban readers. In the second half of the twentieth century the free public library system in Australia expanded greatly, such that most municipalities developed and supported their own free public libraries. However, in 1935, at the end of the period under consideration in this thesis, Ralph Munn and Ernest Pitt's summary of the status of public libraries in Australia found that:

To this day the state libraries and the institutes or schools of art comprise the Australian library system. The few rate-supported municipal libraries which have been created are exceptions to this system... The state libraries are the only strong public libraries in Australia to-day.³⁰

Acknowledging their significance and self-ascribed prominence as 'national institutions' in the period under discussion, this thesis principally addresses itself to these 'state' free public libraries situated across Australia in the capital cities Melbourne, Sydney, Hobart, Adelaide, Perth and Brisbane.

The time frame, covering the mid nineteenth century to the mid twentieth century, was selected because it encompassed the most interesting period in the development of the 'will to archive', from the establishment of the major free public reference libraries in the colonies, to the consolidation of the desire to create a social and historical archive within all the state libraries.

²⁸ A Bremer and M Lyons, 'Mechanics' Institute Libraries - the readers demand fiction', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia*, p. 212.

²⁹ J Arnold, 'The circulating library phenomenon', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia*, p. 199.

³⁰ R Munn and ER Pitt, *Australian libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, Melbourne, 1935, pp. 26-27.

The broadness of the theme posed obvious challenges. Attempting to describe in depth the development of archiving tendencies in all the state public libraries would have resulted in too much data and too little opportunity to engage productively with it. This thesis addresses this problem by providing an overview of nation-wide development, while focusing on one of the major state reference libraries established in the colonial period. The Tasmanian Public Library (now the State Library of Tasmania) was chosen for a number of reasons, one of which is the paucity of published material on the history of the institution post 1870. The Tasmanian Public Library also offers an ideal case study by problematising regional and national imperatives on the formation of the archive. It also provides a rich opportunity to analyse the effect of philanthropy, and the agency of individuals associated with the institution, on the development of local and national collections. Historical and geographical factors relating to the library's community also offer rich interpretation. Tasmania (formerly Van Diemen's Land) was first colonised as a British convict colony in 1803, and bore a profound cultural burden due to its penal origins well into the twentieth century. History and memory and their artefactual remains are still potent in the island state. Tasmania epitomizes that 'anxiety about origins' that underlies much cultural production and memory.³¹ These factors offered fertile material for explicating the role of history and memory in the development of the local archive in the public library.

The focus on the Tasmanian Public Library is balanced by an overview of related developments in the other state libraries in the period under discussion. Where the other state libraries provide interesting and useful examples of their own to illuminate the thesis problem — in some cases more so than the Tasmanian Public Library — I have used them in more depth.³²

³¹ As John Frow notes, settler anxiety about origins is binary in Australia, reflecting deeply rooted ambivalence about the dispossession of the indigenous population, as well as the convict beginnings of European settlement. See J Frow, 'In the penal colony', in M Rossington and A Whitehead (eds.), *Between the psyche and the polis: refiguring history in literature and theory*, Aldershot, 2000, pp. 123-42.

³² This is the case, for example, in the discussion of Australian national fictions in the public library, where the Melbourne Public Library is of particular interest, as Melbourne was the focal

Comparisons with international library practice are made in the thesis where they are valid and instructive. The British public library formed the principal inspiration for Australian libraries in the nineteenth century, and comparisons with British practice inform the early thesis chapters in particular. American library practice assumed greater interest for Australian librarians in the twentieth century, with a few librarians such as Henry Charles Lennox Anderson, principal librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales from 1893, actively promoting American example.³³ As Kirsop has noted, in the twentieth century ‘renovation in librarianship frequently took ... technical paths that led to North America rather than Europe’.³⁴ William Herbert Ifould, principal librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales from 1912, observed in 1923 that ‘American libraries are the best in the world’, and suggested that Australian libraries ‘must follow on American lines’.³⁵ The American Library of Congress was used explicitly as a model for the new Australian national library in the decades after Australian Federation.³⁶ Comparisons with the American Carnegie libraries are also utilised in relation to the Tasmanian Public Library, which was the first Australian public library to receive a Carnegie building grant, in 1902. Because of size limitations, the thesis does not attempt to compare Australian public libraries to any great extent with those in New Zealand, despite some potentially fruitful geographical and historical points of nexus.

Areas of analysis that have not been addressed include class and gender issues to do with library provision and user-ship. In this thesis I also acknowledge that, despite tackling large issues of national and local identity, history and memory in Australia, I have nowhere addressed the fundamental concern of Australia as a settler-colony in relationship to its indigenes. Eminent Australian historian Henry Reynolds has observed that while Aborigines ‘figured prominently’ in historical and descriptive literature in the nineteenth century, a ‘cult of forgetfulness’

point of creative literary culture in Australia in the first four decades of the twentieth century. See D Walker, *Dream and disillusion: a search for Australian cultural identity*, Canberra, 1976.

³³ Anderson had a strong influence on younger librarians such as E Morris Miller, who is a central figure in this thesis.

³⁴ Kirsop, ‘Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia’, p. 80.

³⁵ ‘American libraries’, *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 16 August 1923, p. 8.

³⁶ See Tiffen, ‘Recording the nation’, p. 345.

emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, coinciding with Federation and the ‘flowering of Australian nationalism’ (and also, as this thesis finds, with the growth of the will to archive in the public library).³⁷ This correlation of ‘forgetting’ of indigenous history and the embrace of settler archives suggests further investigation, although such a study is beyond the scope of this thesis.

This thesis also does not attempt to address reading practices for Australiana related to public library collections, in anything but the most superficial terms. There is little available direct evidence of reading practices in relation to the type of material that this thesis investigates. As Peter Mansfield has found in his MA thesis in the context of the Ballarat public libraries in the nineteenth century, there is a severe shortage of primary records that throw light on the reading habits of individual library patrons in Australia.³⁸ Unlike Keith Adkins’ examination of the library at Evandale, where there were rich archives of reader borrowing patterns in the nineteenth century, for the Tasmanian Public Library there are no borrowing records in the period under discussion; nor were the visitor books preserved, which might have indicated the specific visitors and their responses to the institution.³⁹ Chapter 6 of the thesis makes most use of secondary source data on reading practices in discussing literary nationalism and attitudes to Australian fiction in the public library.

Significance and contribution

This thesis makes an original contribution to the study of the development of the public library in Australia. While Australian library history is well populated with institutional histories of individual institutions, studies of key figures within the library profession, studies of the impact of significant events such as the Carnegie

³⁷ H Reynolds, *Why weren't we told?: A personal search for the truth about our history*, Ringwood, Vic., 1999, p. 92. Australian anthropologist WEH Stanner first used the term ‘cult of forgetfulness practiced on a national scale’ in his Boyer lectures for the Australian Broadcasting Corporation in 1968: WEH Stanner, ‘The great Australian silence’, in *After the dreaming; black and white Australians — an anthropologist's view [The Boyer Lectures, 1968]*, Sydney, 1969, p. 25.

³⁸ P Mansfield, ‘Public libraries in Ballarat: 1851-1900’, MA Thesis, Deakin University, 2000, p. 16.

³⁹ See KE Adkins, ‘For the best of reasons: the Evandale Subscription Library 1847-1861’, PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2004.

survey in the 1930s, or of subsets of library provision such as Mechanics' Institutes or circulating libraries, there is a paucity of studies that approach the provision of public library services from a broad cultural perspective. This thesis attempts to broaden the approach in Australian library historiography, by analysing the relationship between the major state libraries and large-scale social and cultural forces over time.

By paying closer attention to the role that the state libraries played as Australia's principal public archives up until the middle of the twentieth century, the thesis provides the most comprehensive description and critiques to date of the evolution of the will to archive in Australia. The thesis also contributes to the growing understanding of the evolution of historical consciousness in Australia, seen through the lens of the engagement of individuals and institutions with collecting, preserving and utilising the written and documentary artefacts of a young nation. By utilising a case study format within the broader analysis, the thesis also offers the first history of the Tasmanian Public Library from the 1870s to the 1940s, and resurrects the history of the major donor William Walker, whose contribution to the evolution of the institution has been all but forgotten.

Methodology

This thesis draws upon new international approaches to library history. It does not aim to provide an institutional history of the development of the major state libraries in Australia. It sits, rather, in the field of cultural and social history, addressing the themes of national identity and patriotism, local pride and community identity, in public library evolution. The attitudes and activities of librarians, library managers and trustees, philanthropists and smaller scale donors provide the primary evidence. The thesis has neither a quantitative nor a statistical foundation. Rather it focuses on the social and cultural contexts of the development of interest in the social and historical archive in the public library, seeking to avoid triumphalist conclusions about the changes it depicts.

In the course of formulating this dissertation and presenting empirical

demonstration for processes of change, I have been strongly drawn to a diversity of theoretical perspectives, in order to delve more deeply into the role that public libraries might play in the construction of local and national identities in a colonial and post-colonial locality. Theory is a valuable heuristic device, as John Tosh and Seán Lang argue, in its ‘capacity to raise interesting questions’.⁴⁰ It allows analyses to move from the close perspective to the wide, and back again, to discern ‘the shapes and consistencies of local meanings’, and ‘to what extent they hang together’, as William Sewell argues.⁴¹ The ‘local meanings’ that are revealed indicate points of cultural coherence, emerging, as Sewell argues, from the contestation of core values, boundaries and norms that are central to the wider social and cultural production and consumption of meaning. An adventurous approach to theory also smoothes the transition over disciplinary boundaries. This is a scholarly trajectory that recent disciplinary criticism within Australian cultural history *and* international library history explicitly encourages, as discussed below.

A multi-theoretical approach acknowledges that Australian conditions for understanding the questions posed by the thesis necessarily differ from other studies of library history (in Britain, Europe or North America, for example). Negotiations and adaptations of theoretical positions are necessary. The field of cultural studies in Australia provides a precedent for this position. Australian cultural historians find that a ‘degree of theoretical or analytical “uncertainty”’ marks work in Australia, a product of the ‘Australian practice of testing theory against the conditions’.⁴² Graeme Turner argues that the use of European theory in the Australian context is one dominated by the ‘regular practice of appropriation and then modification to local conditions’.⁴³ In order to make a critique of the ‘category of the nation’, which has been fundamental to Australian social history and literary studies, Turner finds it necessary to employ ‘strategic modification’

⁴⁰ J Tosh and S Lang, *The pursuit of history: aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history*, Harlow, 2006, p. 248.

⁴¹ WH Sewell, ‘The concept(s) of culture’, in VE Bonnell, LA Hunt and R Biernacki (eds.), *Beyond the cultural turn: new directions in the study of society and culture*, Berkeley, Calif., 1999, p. 58.

⁴² G Turner, ‘Introduction: moving the margins: theory, practice and Australian cultural studies’, in G Turner (ed.), *Nation, culture, text: Australian cultural and media studies*, London; New York, 1993, p. 11.

⁴³ Turner, ‘Introduction’, p. 6.

of the theoretical approaches emerging from the 'centre': 'theoretical positions that once seemed licensed as global explanations have to accept their provisionality or contingency as they move from the centre to the margins', he observes.⁴⁴ Turner positively describes as a valuable tactic the resultant postcolonial 'bricolage' of theoretical application and interrogation ('of continually modifying and adapting what comes to us so that it can be put to use').⁴⁵

This sort of theoretical adaptability has also marked recent international library historiography.⁴⁶ Those at the vanguard of the field have in recent years urged a shift from well-populated chronologies to the formulation and adaptation of theory and openness to inter-disciplinary perspectives. Alistair Black has noted the 'poverty of theory which has afflicted library history', and urges more active interpretation of context 'to pin-point the social functions and micro-worlds of libraries, and their professionals, providers, and patrons'.⁴⁷ Similarly, Jean-Pierre *Hérubel* suggests that '[j]udicious borrowings and incorporation of other research reinvigorate and reanimate the idea of the library as focal point'.⁴⁸ Ilka Makinen observes that if the field of library and information history 'wants to be taken seriously it must have connections to broader theoretical perspectives, theories of

⁴⁴ Turner, 'Introduction', p. 11.

⁴⁵ G Turner, 'Of rocks and hard places: the colonized, the national and Australian cultural studies', *Cultural Studies*, vol. 6, no. 3, 1992, p. 432.

⁴⁶ As Donald Davis describes it, this emerged from a concern that 'historians as a whole have failed to understand the true role for the study of libraries. They apparently do not view the study of libraries as a crucial and central element in the transmission of knowledge and of the entire cultural heritage of a society': DG Davis and JA Aho, 'Whither library history? A critical essay on Black's model for the future of library history, with some additional options', *Library History*, vol. 17, no. 1, 2001, p. 32.

⁴⁷ Black writes that 'too little attention has been paid to wider social, economic and political developments': A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996, p. 16. Black's assertion can be seen in the example of Marion Casey's discussion of Melville Dewey and Charles McCarthy and the impact of 'efficiency' as a social concept in the nineteenth century, when she writes that '[i]n studying the two librarians in their drive for efficiency we are fortunate to witness a blurring of lines between library history and social/economic/political history'. Casey also refers to the 'often elusive, difficult-to-document phenomenon of library history melding into the social and economic and political history of the era': M Casey, 'Efficiency, Taylorism, and Libraries in Progressive America', in DG Davis (ed.), *Libraries and culture: proceedings of Library History Seminar VI, 19-22 March 1980, Austin, Texas*, Austin, 1981, pp. 266, 276.

⁴⁸ J-PVM *Hérubel*, 'Historiography's horizon and imperative: the legacy of Febvrian Annales and library history as cultural history', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 39, no. 3, 2004, p. 301.

society, be they academically historical or more social-science orientated'.⁴⁹ This increasing engagement with theoretical interpretation is part of a generalised concern at the place of library history in intellectual and academic endeavour, characterised by debate about the relation of the field to information science, the history of the book (*histoire du livre*) and the history of reading, or a sociological focus incorporating social, cultural, intellectual and public history.⁵⁰

In this thesis I have found it very productive to draw upon theoretical approaches from cultural studies, book history, archive theory and new museology. The field of cultural studies offers much useful theorisation for library history, particularly the conceptualisation of 'cultural struggle' emerging from the work of Antonio Gramsci, and Stuart Hall, and has been not infrequently evoked in recent library history.⁵¹ Culture is conceived as a process involving mediation and struggle, adaptation and resistance, cultural borrowing and exchange. As Peter Burke writes, 'what the historian needs to investigate is the logic underlying these appropriations and combinations, the local reasons for these choices'.⁵² 'Cultural struggle' offers a way of understanding how the Australian public library changed in the context of Australia's specific history as a settler nation, and its ongoing complexities of cultural identification. As Barry Smith and Samuel L Goldberg

⁴⁹ I Makinen, 'New institutional economics and information history - is there a point of contact?' *Library History*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2008, p. 118. The widening of boundaries in library history in recent years is clearly articulated by the change of title of the major British journal from *Library History*, to *Library and Information History* in 2009.

⁵⁰ See Davis and Aho, 'Whither library history?'; J Rose, 'Alternative futures for library history', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 38, no. 1, 2003, pp. 50-60; Hérubel, 'Historiography's Horizon and Imperative'; GK Peatling, 'Discipline and the discipline: histories of the British public library', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2003, pp. 121-48; and T Augst, 'Introduction', in T Augst and KE Carpenter (eds.), *Institutions of reading: the social life of libraries in the United States*, Amherst, 2007, pp. 1-21. For an early history of the discipline in Australia, see WB Rayward, 'Library history in context', in Rayward, *Australian library history in context*, pp. 1-5.

⁵¹ S Hall, K-H Chen and D Morley, *Stuart Hall: critical dialogues in cultural studies*, London; New York, 1996; and S Hall, 'Notes on Deconstructing the "Popular"', in R Samuel (ed.), *People's history and socialist theory*, London; Boston, 1981, pp. 227-40. Key American library history scholar Wayne Wiegand has found that the concept of cultural hegemony provides a 'reasonable explanation' for the institutional change and adaptation seen in the public library in America, where 'ideational persuasion' takes place to mediate a 'consent of the masses': W Wiegand, 'Collecting contested titles: the experience of five small public libraries in the rural Midwest, 1893-1956', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2005, pp. 381-82. Alistair Black also finds that in Britain the 'pre-1919 public library fits well with Gramsci's interpretation of hegemony': Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 188.

⁵² P Burke, *Varieties of cultural history*, Cambridge, 1997, p. 209.

have suggested, '[w]hether in religion, or in education, or in expressing "patriotic" loyalties, Australians have evinced deep insecurities in their attitudes to the Imperial core and in their aspirations for themselves. The outcome has frequently been a complex mixture of assertiveness and defensiveness'.⁵³ Cultural struggle is evident in the way a new type of 'national' and 'local' culture emerged from the inherited model in the form of public library culture, in philosophies, collections and practices.⁵⁴ I have found these ideas particularly helpful in helping to understand the agency exerted through philanthropic activity related to the public library.

The new critique of the ideologies of the museum has much to offer similar explorations in library history.⁵⁵ The public library is often discursively grouped with museums and archives in investigations of the production of history, the growth of historical consciousness and the broader 'public historical sphere'.⁵⁶ Museology offers fruitful comparisons in exploring institutional nationalism and the construction of community identity in the public library. Much recent museological scholarship has examined these factors, as well as the role of memory and history.⁵⁷ As Amiria Henare has argued, 'museums have a peculiar

⁵³ SL Goldberg and FB Smith, 'Preface', in SL Goldberg and FB Smith (eds.), *Australian cultural history*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1988, p. 4.

⁵⁴ Wiegand, 'Collecting contested titles', p. 381.

⁵⁵ See, for example, T Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, London; New York, 1995, which approaches Australian museum history from a richly theoretical, and international perspective. Also C Healy, 'Histories and collecting: museums, objects and memories', in K Darian-Smith and P Hamilton (eds.), *Memory and history in twentieth-century Australia*, Melbourne, 1994, pp. 33-51; C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997; and C Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, Sydney, 2008.

⁵⁶ See for example Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism*, p. 75, or Paula Hamilton, who writes 'the collective memory on which historians principally draw for source material is archival — that is, gathered by state institutions such as libraries, archives, and museums': P Hamilton, 'The knife edge: debates about memory and history', in Darian-Smith and Hamilton, *Memory and history in twentieth-century Australia*, p. 20.

⁵⁷ See, for example, J Wilton, 'Museums and memories: remembering the past in local and community museums', *Public History Review*, vol. 12, 2006, pp. 58-79; and M Anderson and A Reeves, 'Contested identities: museums and the nation in Australia', in FS Kaplan (ed.), *Museums and the making of "ourselves": the role of objects in national identity*, London; New York, 1994, pp. 79-124; JM Gore, 'Representations of history and nation in museums in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand: the National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002. Graeme Davison proposes that a national museum is potentially a place 'not just for celebrating the nation's triumphs, or even for purging its collective sins, but also for confronting the ways in which the nation is itself constituted and reproduced through its collective memories': G Davison, 'What should a national

authority in that they are seen to provide official versions of history, derived from academia and often sanctioned by the state'.⁵⁸ The ways in which the public library might actively produce history and origination narratives have not been studied to the same extent, possibly because libraries have not exploited exhibitionary strategies to the same degree as museums.⁵⁹

The new museology is enriched by studies focusing on the 'stratigraphy' of collections, how they are built over time with the agency of donors, collectors and institutional managers.⁶⁰ I have found that public library collections are also usefully conceived in this way, as providing layered information on the ways in which history and identity were articulated through time and passed down to the present. Museum history also offers an enriching perspective on individual artefacts: literary documents in the library context. As museologist Susan Pearce writes, it is important to consider the 'significance of the artefact, for its own time and place and for ourselves', including both its material characterisation and its psychological role (embodying 'a freight of emotional significance, collective and individual').⁶¹ Book history, similarly, provides analytical tools to assess the significance of books and documents considered, in Nicolas Barker and Thomas Adams' words, as 'historic artifacts and as a function of social history', or in DF McKenzie's, as 'the sociology of texts'.⁶² These perspectives provide another

museum do?: learning from the world', in Lake, *Memory, monuments and museums*, pp. 108-109. GK Peatling has noted that the 'absence of national identity from library history is all the more curious when one considers the quality and originality of cognate work which has been produced in the field of museum studies', where scholars are 'increasingly viewing museums as sites in which discourses of national identity can be constructed and propagated': GK Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain, 1850-1919', *Library History*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, p. 36.

⁵⁸ AJM Henare, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*, Cambridge, UK; New York, 2005, p. 11.

⁵⁹ This thesis demonstrates, however, that exhibitions of historical material came to have greater significance for the major Australian reference libraries in Sydney and Melbourne from the 1920s and 1930s, coinciding with a more active historical consciousness in the general community.

⁶⁰ Stuart Macintyre has described the great deposit libraries as archaeological sites, with 'overlaid strata of artefacts that cumulatively record the history of public literacy': S Macintyre, 'What about the books?' *La Trobe Library Journal*, vol. 14, no. 55, 1995, p. 6. Museum studies provides a comparatively richer historiography than library history to explore these ideas. See for example Henare, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*; Bennett, *The birth of the museum*; J Elsner and R Cardinal, *The cultures of collecting*, Melbourne, 1994; and SM Pearce, (ed.), *Interpreting objects and collections*, London; New York, 1994.

⁶¹ SM Pearce, 'Thinking about things', in Pearce, *Interpreting objects and collections*, pp. 130-31.

⁶² N Barker and TR Adams, 'A new model for the study of the book', in N Barker (ed.), *A potencie of life: books in society: the Clark lectures, 1986-1987*, London, 2001, p. 5; DF McKenzie, 'The

layer of analysis, a study within a study, the history of a specific artefact influencing and being influenced in turn by the history of a particular library.

In the thesis I have used the term 'archive' and phrases such as the 'will to archive' in a broad sense, to capture the newly emerging awareness of the need to gather and preserve 'records' of the past for the benefit of the present and the future in the period under discussion. The notion of the 'archive', I believe, effectively evokes the significance of the growing interest in officially collecting 'textual' Australiana of all types (from government records and published and unpublished histories and fictions, to recorded oral histories) and the increasing appreciation of the importance of preserving this material for the nation. In using the term, I acknowledge that I am moving beyond the boundaries of the traditional description of an archive as a collection of government documents. The definition of archive in this thesis is that employed by cultural theorists, describing a body of documents and printed matter collected either intentionally or haphazardly as evidence of the past, which takes in — but is not confined to — official or state repositories.⁶³ The archive is both a trope, and a physical and ideological resource.⁶⁴ This latter conception of archives is valuable as it allows a more searching analysis of the types of cultural pressures which, to quote Antoinette Burton, 'leave traces' and which 'render archives themselves artifacts of history'.⁶⁵ As Thomas Osborne writes:

...in meta-historical terms, theorists and others have been arguing that the archive is not an innocent space; that what were once thought to be documents are in fact monuments; that archival deposition is motivated and not accidental; that the reach of the archive is not the same as the reach of the actual past; that there is a rhetoric of the real in history rather than merely a recounting of it.⁶⁶

book as an expressive form', in D Finkelstein and A McCleery (eds.), *The book history reader*, London, 2006, pp. 35-46, originally published in *The Panizzi Lectures, 1985: Bibliography and the sociology of texts*, London: British Library, 1986.

⁶³ See A Burton, 'Introduction: archive fever, archive stories', in A Burton (ed.), *Archive stories: facts, fictions, and the writing of history*, Durham, NC, 2005, esp. p. 3.

⁶⁴ Burton, 'Introduction: archive fever, archive stories', p. 5.

⁶⁵ Burton, 'Introduction: archive fever, archive stories', p. 6.

⁶⁶ T Osborne, 'History, theory, disciplinarity', in P Joyce (ed.), *The social in question: new bearings in history and the social sciences*, New York, 2002, p. 186.

Much recent archive scholarship has explored the interconnection between the formation of archives and the evolution of the nation-state.⁶⁷ The archive is a collaborator in the 'official' process of history production, 'whether by design or, less deliberately, as an institutional effect', as Francis X Blouin and William G Rosenberg have observed.⁶⁸ A theoretical recognition of the politics of the archive is productive in the context of Australian public library development, where the formation of specific archival bodies was delayed and the public library (and to a lesser extent the public museum) took on a key archival role until the mid-twentieth century. As the key 'state archive' in Australia until the mid twentieth century, the public library was certainly a place in which official archival exclusions and inclusions shaped citizens' understandings of their region and nation.

Thematically, theorisations of collective memory, historical consciousness, and nationalism are all central to this thesis. As Peter Seixas observes in the introduction to his volume *Theorizing historical consciousness*, 'the ties between institutions for the preservation of memory in the modern era and the project of nation building remain fundamental'.⁶⁹ The 'performance' of history (in historian Greg Denning's conception) through collective memory, the growth of historical consciousness, patriotism and nationalism, all underpin the evolution of the will to archive.⁷⁰ Memory studies, which have burgeoned in Australia in the past decade

⁶⁷ See, for example, the papers in FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, documentation, and institutions of social memory: essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 2006; and in the Australian context specifically, Piggott, 'Archives and memory'. Tony Ballantyne has also examined aspects of archive production specifically in the colonial situation. See T Ballantyne, 'Mr. Peal's archive: mobility and exchange in histories of empire', in Burton, *Archive stories*, pp. 87-110. Ballantyne challenges the 'nation-state-focused vision of the archive', suggesting that the 'unquestioned priority attached to state-produced archives' has distracted attention from archival production (particularly in the colonies) associated with 'particular locales, broad regional patterns, or structures that transect or transcended the colony's boundaries' (p. 106). Ballantyne urges archive analysis that addresses colonial archives as part of a larger imperial system of creation and dissemination of knowledge. This thesis does not attempt to address this larger conception in the context of the Australian public-library-as-archive, but acknowledges its importance for future study.

⁶⁸ FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg, 'Introduction Part IV: Archives, memory, and political culture', in Blouin and Rosenberg, *Archives, documentation, and institutions of social memory*, p. 255.

⁶⁹ PC Seixas, 'Introduction', in PC Seixas (ed.), *Theorizing historical consciousness*, Toronto, 2004, p. 5.

⁷⁰ 'Performance' reflects an association of history and anthropological insight that asserts that history cannot be divorced from the circumstances of its telling: the creation of identity is a

and a half, provide a foundation of theoretical material upon which to work, and an incentive to add the public library perspective to this field.⁷¹ Marilyn Lake urges the importance, in the Australian context, of understanding ‘the reasons for people’s investment in the past and the relationship between collective memory and contemporary identity’, and ‘the importance of cultural institutions in shaping historical memory’.⁷² Detailed studies provide understandings of both the specificity of collective remembering in white Australia and its broad similarities with the process in other cultures.⁷³ Analysis *and* critique of the specificities of collective remembering for the ‘archival’ institutions of the public reference library in colonial and post-colonial periods are important, and rarely undertaken.⁷⁴

A central theme in the thesis is that of nationalism. Nationalism has a peculiar resonance and ubiquity in Australian history and historiography.⁷⁵ Stephen Alomes and Catherine Jones have argued that:

...nationalism has been important in the growth of all nations in the nineteenth- and twentieth centuries as national institutions, education systems, media and economies took over from local realities. In Australia, a new country where the identity of the nation had to be defined for the new inhabitants in some ways from the start, this has been particularly important.⁷⁶

‘performance’, and history is just one of the many different types of ‘meaning pursuits’, ‘from gossip to the recitation of myth to systematic enquiry’. See G Denning, *Performances*, Carlton, Vic., 1996, especially ‘A poetic for histories’, pp. 35-63.

⁷¹ In one of the earliest examples of memory studies in Australia, published in 1994, Paula Hamilton wrote of the need for more investigations of ‘public negotiations over memory, and detailed studies that help us to understand both the specificity of collective remembering in this country and its broad similarities with the process in other cultures’. See Hamilton, ‘The knife edge’, p. 27.

⁷² Lake, ‘Introduction: the past in the present’, p. 5.

⁷³ For a very important and stimulating analysis of the investigation of memory and history, see A Confino, ‘Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method’, *American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 5, 1997, pp. 1386-403.

⁷⁴ Piggott, ‘Archives and memory’, p. 300.

⁷⁵ The approach of the centenary of Federation in 2001 in particular stimulated a large body of historiography concerning nationalism in Australia.

⁷⁶ S Alomes and C Jones, *Australian nationalism: a documentary history*, North Ryde, NSW, 1991, p. 2.

The approach of the centenary of Federation in 2001 prompted a wide body of work examining nationalism during the early development of the nation-state.⁷⁷ An appetite for challenging what Alan Atkinson has labelled '1990s nationalism', a 'belief in the timeless and absolute reality of Australia', has emerged in twenty-first century historiography.⁷⁸ The nation-state has been widely discredited among many intellectuals as a vehicle for delusions of grandeur, leading to ethnic conflicts and in the worst cases, to genocide.⁷⁹ This is a significant shift from earlier perceptions of the national edifice as a structure upon which disparate ethnic and social groups might build a community of equal citizens. Yet the latter is the perception of nation that was current in the period addressed in this thesis. David Carter notes that, while the critique of nationalism is now well established, 'a defining enterprise of both Australian studies and Australian literary studies since the 1970s', it is evident that we are still discovering the range of the nation's historical and textual forms.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ See J Hirst, *The sentimental nation: the making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Melbourne, 2000; WG McMinn, *Nationalism and Federalism in Australia*, Melbourne, 1994; H Irving, *To constitute a nation: a cultural history of Australia's constitution*, Cambridge, UK; New York, 1997; R Birrell, *A nation of our own: citizenship and nation-building in federation Australia*, Melbourne, 1995; and G Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history*, St. Leonards, NSW, 2000. Earlier historiography has also investigated nationalism, most importantly R White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, 1981; S Alomes, *A nation at last?: the changing character of Australian nationalism 1880-1988*, North Ryde, NSW, 1988, and L Trainor, *British imperialism and Australian nationalism: manipulation, conflict, and compromise in the late nineteenth century*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1994. The publication of Alomes and Jones, *Australian nationalism: a documentary history* provided a useful compendium of documentary sources.

⁷⁸ A Atkinson, 'Tasmania and the multiplicity of nations: 2005 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture', *Papers and Proceedings Tasmanian Historical Research Association*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2005, p. 192.

⁷⁹ A Curthoys, 'Cultural history and the nation', in R White and H-M Teo (eds.), *Cultural history in Australia*, Sydney, 2003, p. 29. See White and Teo, *Cultural history in Australia* for a critique of nationalist historiography. Martyn Lyons and Penny Russell observe that it has been the emergence of the 'linguistic turn', particularly the study of history and memory inspired by Pierre Nora, that provides 'ammunition for questioning and undermining the old certainties of progressive, nationalist historiography' in Australia: M Lyons and PA Russell, *Australia's history: themes and debates*, Sydney, NSW, 2005, p. xvi. At the forefront of this questioning was Richard White, who in 1981 suggested that when Australian historians 'look at ideas about national identity, we need to ask, not whether they are true or false, but what their function is, whose creation they are, and whose interests they serve': White, *Inventing Australia*, p. viii. Graeme Turner suggests, in the context of cultural studies, that there are 'other ways of talking about the national, ways that still defend the importance of the idea of the nation because of (or perhaps despite) the uses to which it may be put, and ways that enable us not only to displace earlier nationalist discourses but also ourselves, to perhaps interrogate the forming of our own positions, as among the processes to be understood': Turner, 'Of rocks and hard places', p. 431.

⁸⁰ D Carter, 'Good readers and good citizens: literature, media and the nation', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 19, no. 2, 1999, p. 136.

This thesis is built on the premise that a study of the operations of nationalism and generalised patriotism in the public library in Australia can enrich our understanding not only of the development of the library, but also the wider institutions of Australian literature and Australian history/historiography.⁸¹ As Carter observes, ‘if we are interested in cultural history, there will be limits to what we can say before bumping up against the nation as an idea, or, more important, as an institutional structure’.⁸² Carter further suggests that, ‘for all our obsessive concern with putting nationalism in its historical place, the definitive history of Australian cultural nationalism, or of relations between literature and national institutions, remains to be written’.⁸³ This thesis aims to redress this historiographical gap in the context of the public library and its relationship with nationalism.

As places in which print culture and its dissemination are central to institutional purpose and self-definition, public libraries are well situated to examine the effects of the ‘imagining’ of the nation through print culture, an aspect of the production of nationalism originally posited by Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*.⁸⁴ Reflecting upon Anderson’s seminal work, Mike Featherstone finds that the ‘availability of a print culture which can interconnect people over time and space’

⁸¹ As Alomes and Jones have argued, evidence-based methods of examining the effects of nationalism including reflections on ‘the different words which have been used ... the different stereotypes associated with Australian-ness and ... the groups and forces who use national ideas and images for their own particular ends’ ultimately contribute to richer understandings of the multiplicity of practices that moulded the citizens of the newly unified Australian nation: Alomes and Jones, *Australian nationalism*, p. 1.

⁸² Carter, ‘Good readers and good citizens’, p. 137.

⁸³ Carter, ‘Good readers and good citizens’, p. 138.

⁸⁴ Anderson, *Imagined communities*. Anderson does not specifically discuss public libraries or archives in his work, though he does consider the ‘museumizing imagination’ (p. 178) as well as the influence of categorization through census and map production in colonised regions as a ‘totalizing classificatory grid’ (p. 184). Tony Ballantyne argues that while Anderson emphasised the pivotal role of print in the constitution of the nation, scholars must also address the ways print facilitated important transnational networks, ‘where political models, evangelical sermons and travel narratives circulated freely within an enlarged public sphere’: Tony Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, Basingstoke, 2002, p. 12. In the limits of this thesis I have not been able to address this imperative, but I acknowledge the importance of this theme and scope for future scholarship, particularly in exploring the concepts of ‘webs of empire’ and role of Australian archives, libraries and ‘information professionals’.

is a crucial factor in the construction of national identities.⁸⁵ The very possibility of the nation therefore ‘depends upon the development of the book and newspaper alongside a literate reading public capable of using these sources throughout the territorial area and thus able to imagine themselves as a community’.⁸⁶ Print culture brings the nation into being in an ‘imagined community’, as ‘a set of more or less coherent images and memories which deal with the crucial questions of the origins, difference and distinctiveness of a people’.⁸⁷ Appropriate ‘cultural work’ is undertaken to develop an acceptable public face for national sentiment, involving the mobilization of a ‘repertoire of communal symbols, sentiments and collective memories’.⁸⁸ While this position potentially marginalizes oral culture, it alerts us to the powerful role that an active community archive of print culture — in the form of a library or national archive — may have in sustaining nationalism.

Scholarly interest in the effects of nationalism in public library activity is a recent phenomenon. In an important article in *Library History* in 2004 GK Peatling urged better attention to the constitutive role that public libraries play in the formation and potency of national identity. Peatling considered the ‘failure seriously to consider nations and national identities’ a ‘lamentable omission’ in even the most forward-thinking work in the new library history, particularly in comparison to other fields of cultural history in which nationalism is a ‘cutting edge theme’.⁸⁹ This thesis seeks to address this gap in library historiography in the Australian context.

Sources

The thesis utilises a range of sources to elucidate the philosophy and activity of those involved with public library development in Australia in the period. Official sources include documentation produced by bodies associated with various public libraries, particularly trustees’ minutes, annual reports, various subcommittee

⁸⁵ M Featherstone, ‘Localism, globalism and cultural identity’, in L Alcoff and E Mendieta (eds.), *Identities: race, class, gender, and nationality*, Malden, MA, 2003, p. 346.

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

⁸⁹ Peatling, ‘Public libraries and national identity in Britain’, pp. 36-37.

reports, and accession registers. These materials provide essential data on the day-to-day running of the institutions, information about donors, statistics on loans, purchases, visitor numbers, etc. The published catalogues of library collections are also essential sources, used with accession registers to contribute to an understanding of collection stratification. Correspondence between librarians, trustees, donors and members of the public, typically found in the archives of the institutions under discussion, are also drawn upon. The published and unpublished papers of professional library conferences, and the published professional journals of the various associations of librarians, are valuable sources of information on contemporary attitudes to collecting, and wider cultural and social issues as they intersect with public library development. Newspapers from around Australia, accessed through the National Library of Australia's Australian Newspapers online databank,⁹⁰ microfilm and newspaper cuttings files, provide a rich source of information on national public library activity and attitudes of the press, managers, and the public.

Specific sources additional to those mentioned above, relating to the Tasmanian Public Library and its donors and managers, include the notebooks written by philanthropist William Walker (from the Allport Collection), newspaper-clipping books made by Walker, as well as the volumes donated by Walker in 1924 and 1933, all held by the State Library of Tasmania. The donated volumes have marginalia, stamps, bookplates and insertions, all of which offer invaluable data about the interventions of readers and owners in life of the book as a social *and* cultural artefact. Notes held in the Tasmaniana Library by E Morris Miller and WELH Crowther add to the data on Walker and his donations, as well as more general library developments. The University of Tasmania Library (Special/Rare Collection) holds further notebooks of Walker, and notes by E Morris Miller relating to the Tasmanian Public Library. Private papers of collectors (in public and private ownership), including those of William Walker, James Backhouse Walker, and William ELH Crowther, are also utilised. The Tasmanian Museum

⁹⁰ <http://newspapers.nla.gov.au/ndp/del/home>

and Art Gallery minutes of trustees' meetings are pertinent, as are the minutes of the Hobart City Council.

Valuable secondary sources are plentiful in the field. I have found Alistair Black's two volumes on the development of the public library in Britain since the mid eighteenth century,⁹¹ and the compilation of essays edited by Thomas Augst on the American public library, *Institutions of reading*,⁹² most stimulating. These approach library history with great intellectual rigour, fruitfully engaging with theoretical positions in cultural history and social history in addressing nation-wide phenomena, and asserting the political nature of the institution. There have been a handful of international studies on the development of heritage, local and national collections in the public library, which vary in their scope and theoretical rigour. These include insightful essays by Patrick Joyce and GK Peatling, which provided fundamental stimuli to approach liberalism and nationalism in the public library.⁹³ Doctoral dissertations by Penelope Jenkinson, and Nicola Smith, have addressed 'local history' and local history collections in the British public library in the late nineteenth- and twentieth centuries.⁹⁴ Smith's thesis offers useful comparisons with the Australian situation, particularly relating to the professionalisation of librarianship and its connection with the local archive. There are a small number of useful studies comparative of the effects of nationalism on the formation of collections and library policy outside of Britain, including the analysis of the South African national library by Gabrielle Ritchie,⁹⁵

⁹¹ Black, *A new history of the English public library*; A Black, *The public library in Britain, 1914-2000*, London, 2000.

⁹² Augst and Carpenter, *Institutions of reading*.

⁹³ P Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive', *History of the Human Sciences*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1999, pp. 35-49; P Joyce, *The rule of freedom: liberalism and the modern city*, London; New York, 2003; Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', pp. 33-47.

⁹⁴ P Jenkinson, 'Heritage and the public library: the influence and interpretation of heritage in the English public library from 1850 to the present, with particular attention to the provision of local studies', PhD Thesis, Leeds Metropolitan University, 1999; P Jenkinson, 'Travelling hopefully: progress and the nineteenth-century public library', *Library History*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1999, pp. 23-32; N Smith, 'Finding a place: librarians, local history and the search for professional and social status, 1890-1925', PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2006.

⁹⁵ G Ritchie, 'The culture of collecting: the national library as a memory institution', *Historia*, vol. 47, no. 2, 2002, pp. 511-30.

and in the American context Jean Matthews,⁹⁶ Jane Rosenberg,⁹⁷ and CM Ostrowski,⁹⁸ examining the evolution of the 'national' American libraries, the Smithsonian Library and the Library of Congress.

Australian library historian Don Boadle writes that 'the history of libraries and archives is a minority interest in Australia': the output of library history in this country is small in comparison to Britain or North America.⁹⁹ There are a handful of historical overviews of the public library available to the researcher. The scholarship addressing book history in Australia in general, including histories of reading practices, has expanded greatly in the past decade, and provides an enormously valuable background to this thesis.¹⁰⁰ As in international library history, Australian library historiography is typically under-theorised. Individual studies of particular use in providing empirical data as background to this thesis include Norman Horrocks' PhD dissertation on the influence of Andrew Carnegie's philanthropy in Australia, which also includes discussion of the work of the Carnegie Foundation in promoting professional library activity after the early building grants,¹⁰¹ and a number of discrete institutional histories. Keith Adkins' examination of early history of a regional Tasmanian library, the Evandale Subscription Library, is particularly illuminating for data on readers and their borrowing habits, an area in which there is a paucity of material for most libraries in the period under discussion.¹⁰² Histories of the other state libraries and the National Library exist, differing in the depth and rigour of approach.¹⁰³ These institutional histories provide an essential empirical foundation for the thematic approach taken in this thesis; where there has been a paucity of data related to the

⁹⁶ JV Matthews, 'Libraries, books, and the nature of America: The creation of the Smithsonian Institution', in Davis, *Libraries and culture*, pp. 152-65.

⁹⁷ JA Rosenberg, *The nation's great library: Herbert Putnam and the Library of Congress, 1899-1939*, Urbana, 1993.

⁹⁸ CM Ostrowski, 'The Library of Congress and the transformation of literary culture in America, 1782-1861', PhD Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1997.

⁹⁹ D Boadle, 'Using history: historical research and publication by Australian librarians and archivists', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 55, no. 2, 2006, p. 159.

¹⁰⁰ The publication of the first 2 volumes of the 3-volume series of the *A History of the book in Australia* has consolidated much valuable research by key scholars in the field.

¹⁰¹ N Horrocks, 'The Carnegie Corporation of New York and its impact on library development in Australia: a case-study of foundation influence', PhD Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1971, p. 62.

¹⁰² Adkins, 'For the best of reasons'.

¹⁰³ All of these sources are listed in the thesis Bibliography.

topic in these sources, additional primary research has been undertaken. Brian Fletcher's recent outstanding study of the Mitchell Library is exhaustive. Therefore, despite the status of the Mitchell Library as Australia's premier library of Australiana under state auspices, this thesis does not discuss the library in depth except where it is valuable as a comparative example.¹⁰⁴

Specific histories of the Tasmanian Public Library are few. Key works are the MA thesis, and related articles, by John Levett examining the early years of the Tasmanian Public Library (pre-1870).¹⁰⁵ Levett has argued that the preoccupation with overseas models and rejection of local culture ('cultural cringe') was reflected in the collections and catalogues of the Tasmanian Public Library from its earliest inception until at least the middle of the twentieth century, a perception that this thesis challenges.¹⁰⁶ Kate (Catherine) Walpole has written about the transformation of the library in the 1940s through the Libraries Act 1943 that created the State Library of Tasmania.¹⁰⁷ The many other secondary sources utilised in the thesis are indicated throughout the footnotes and in the concluding bibliography.

Structural summary

The purpose of this thesis is to provide an overview of attitudes to local and national history, historical documents and sources, and national literature in the public library, and to assess the changes to these attitudes that occurred over a period of nearly a century. The thesis situates attitudes in the major 'archival'

¹⁰⁴ B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2007.

¹⁰⁵ J Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869 the rise and fall of a colonial institution', M Librarianship Thesis, Monash University, 1984; J Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library in 1850: its members, its managers and its books', in E Morrison and M Talbot (eds.), *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia: papers from the forum on Australian colonial library history held at Monash University 1-2 June, 1984*, Clayton, Vic., 1985, pp. 11-21; J Levett, *The origins of the State Library of Tasmania*, Hobart, 1988; J Levett, 'James Backhouse Walker, the 'Mope-Hawk', and the Tasmanian Public Library — a cautionary tale from 1870', in G Winter (ed.), *Tasmanian insights: essays in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stilwell*, Hobart, 1992, pp. 113-121.

¹⁰⁶ Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869', pp. 99-100.

¹⁰⁷ C Walpole, '"High noon" for Tasmania's libraries: the Libraries Act, 1943', qualifying thesis for enrolment in MA, University of Tasmania, 1996; K Walpole, '"High noon" for Tasmania's libraries: background and consequences of the Libraries Act, 1943', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1997, pp. 175-187.

public libraries within broader changes in Australian society related to nationalism and developing historical consciousness. The thesis is divided into seven chapters, with an introduction and conclusion. The arc of the thesis follows a broadly chronological development of the 'will to archive' in the Australian public library over the course of a century. Within this structure, thematic chapters and case studies add more complex and nuanced analyses.

The first chapter explores the development of the free public library in Australia as it evolved from its British prototype in the nineteenth century, focusing on the formation of collections reflecting the locality and the Australian colonies. The chapter springboards from Patrick Joyce's conceptualisation of the 'liberal archive' in the public library in Britain,¹⁰⁸ comparing the British interest in local collecting with the relative absence of will to archive in the public library in Australia in the same period. The emergence of the will to archive in the major public libraries in Australia at the end of the nineteenth century is addressed, and the growth of interest in local history in the colonies is identified as a central stimulus. The effects of Tasmanian liberalism, the growth of interest in local history, and changing attitudes to the importance of accurate historical records on the development of the Tasmanian Public Library are investigated.

Chapter 2 addresses the new influence of nationalism on Australian public library development at the end of the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century.¹⁰⁹ This period is a particularly interesting one, in which national sentiment increased substantially, shifting from the radical cultural nationalism of the 1890s, to a more generalised patriotism encouraged by the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. The chapter examines how Australian public libraries and librarians actively participated in the nation-building project, and the creation of a differentiated Australian library culture through an assertion of the values of civic reform enhanced by new professionalism and an 'inscription of nation'

¹⁰⁸ Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive'.

¹⁰⁹ For a summary of this, see H Gaunt, "'A native instinct of patriotism': Nationalism in the Australian public library, from Federation to the 1930s. A case study of the Public Library of Tasmania', *Library History*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2008, pp. 152-66.

through library commentary and practice. This emerging role as a resource of — and for — the nation was explored in professional meetings, and disseminated publicly through the press in reports and commentary. This had the effect of preparing local donors to support the institution within a specifically ‘national’ discourse. The exploration of nationalism in the public library emerges from a productive reading of GK Peatling’s call for closer address to the theories and historiography of national identity.¹¹⁰

Chapters 3 and 4 together examine the connection between philanthropy and the will to archive the locality in the public library. A reliance on philanthropy was central to the development of the public library in Britain and Australia. This enforced connection with local taste greatly influenced the formation of collections in public libraries, and attitudes to what types of collections were appropriate. In Tasmania, where social philanthropy was a prominent part of colonial life, individual patronage had a large impact on the development of the public library, although some tension between private and official goals for the library’s development can be discerned.

Chapter 3 discusses library philanthropy in Tasmania during the nineteenth century, through to the receipt of a building grant from Andrew Carnegie in 1902. Chapter 4 follows with an analysis of the enrichment of the local archive through large-scale collection donation. It argues that the perception of the role of bibliographic philanthropy in Australia changed around the turn of the twentieth century, under the impetus of increasing nationalism in Australia. The newly patriotic philanthropy was perceived as a civic duty with a variety of functions: to increase the reading of Australian material, to provide a valuable source for future researchers, and to consolidate the archival foundations of the new nation. Philanthropists significantly altered the face, and purpose, of many of the major libraries in this period. A case study of Tasmanian collector/philanthropist William Walker, who donated his large Australiana and Tasmaniana collections to the Tasmanian Public Library in the last decade of his life, forms the body of the

¹¹⁰ Peatling, ‘Public libraries and national identity in Britain’.

chapter. Chapters 3 and 4 benefit from addressing theories of ‘cultural struggle’, related specifically to library philanthropy. Chapter 4 also employs theory from museum studies and histories of practices (specifically collecting) and Steven Gelber’s work on leisure to address the cultural valorisation at work in patriotic collecting and donation practices.¹¹¹

Chapter 5 engages with the social context of penal history, exploring the effects of silences and collective amnesia on the development of the will to archive. As Tom Griffiths has written, ‘[i]n their quest for a new beginning free of the convict taint, colonists turned away from the continuity of their history’.¹¹² Awareness of archival absences and patterns of suppression in public library collections enrich our understanding of this aspect of colonial and post-colonial remembering and disremembering. The chapter examines the effect of Tasmania’s penal origins on aspects of the development of the local collection at the Tasmanian Public Library over a century. By tracing the ‘cycle’ of a particular convict text, Henry Savery’s *The Hermit in Van Diemen’s Land: from the Colonial Times* (first published in 1829), through its publication, transmission, reception and survival over a century, the chapter explores the effects of remembering and disremembering on the formation of the local archive.¹¹³ Chapter 5 is centrally informed by memory studies, particularly Pierre Nora’s concept of ‘sites of memory’, in seeking to understand a community’s relationship to its history through literary artefacts,¹¹⁴ and derives its case study format from Barker and Adams’ conceptualisation of events in the cycle of the book.¹¹⁵

Chapter 6 places the public library within work in recent Australian literature studies that urges an enriched perception of national creative literature as

¹¹¹ SM Gelber, *Hobbies: leisure and the culture of work in America*, New York, 1999.

¹¹² T Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1996, p. 117.

¹¹³ Barker and Adams, ‘A new model for the study of the book’, p. 14.

¹¹⁴ P Nora, ‘Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire’, *Representations*, vol. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24; and P Nora and LD Kritzman, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*, New York, 1996.

¹¹⁵ Barker and Adams, ‘A new model for the study of the book’.

‘network of social institutions and practices’.¹¹⁶ As Pascale Casanova has cogently argued, the construction of a national literary space is closely related to the political space of the nation, which it in turn helps to construct.¹¹⁷ This chapter investigates the role of the public library in this cyclical relationship, exploring the degree to which the public library engaged with the essentially political process of promoting national fictions. It explores the relationship between the Australian public library and the production and consumption of Australian creative literature from the late nineteenth century through to the beginning of the Second World War. The chapter finds that the public library was slow to promote Australian literature, with little indigenous fiction being stocked before the 1920s, and no real attention given to Australian literature professionally until the 1930s. By the late 1930s librarians began actively to collect and promote local fictions in the institution, both popular and canonical. The acceptance of fiction as a legitimate part of the public library collection fruitfully coalesced with the increasing enthusiasm for, and acceptance of, Australian culture in the wider community.

The final chapter summarises the evolution of the drive towards an explicit ‘heritage’ function in the major state libraries in the first half of the twentieth century. It charts the development of local and national collections in all the state libraries, in the context of the growth of historical consciousness and popular interest in local history. The chapter considers the newly invigorated exhibitionary impulse in the major public libraries, finding that this was central to the new showcasing of history that constituted the creation of ‘public heritage’. The chapter also includes a summary of the development of formal archival responsibility for official and governmental papers in the state libraries. The enrichment of the nascent ‘heritage’ collections at the Tasmanian Public Library, in a period of change and the creation of the State Library of Tasmania, are central to the discussion. The chapter concludes by charting the naturalisation of the

¹¹⁶ D Carter and G Whitlock, ‘Institutions of Australian literature’, in J Walter (ed.), *Australian studies: a survey*, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 110-112.

¹¹⁷ See Casanova, *The world republic of letters*.

notion of 'heritage' and 'memory' in the public library in recent decades, and the emergent interest in local history across the municipal library sector in Australia.

CHAPTER 1:

Transfer of the ‘liberal archive’: the development of local collections in the Australian public library in the 19th century

Introduction

The first chapter of this thesis considers how the free public library in mid- to late-nineteenth-century Australia diverged from its British prototype. Unlike British public libraries, in which the formation of a collection of locally significant material was central to their collection policies and to their role in their communities, colonial Australian public libraries collected local materials haphazardly, if at all, until the very end of the nineteenth century. As Margaret Wyatt has written, ‘[a]lthough rich deposits of locally originating materials were found in British local public libraries from 1850 onwards, and although Australian public libraries were modeled on the British library system, formal collection and preservation of local materials had no part in the Australian system as originally conceived’.¹ This chapter seeks to explicate these divergences and adaptations by placing them in their historical, geographical, and cultural contexts.

The transfer of cultural institutions from the metropolis to the colonies was complex. Substantial differences existed in the nineteenth century between Australia and Britain, in terms of the stratification of society and the ways in which prevalent social and philosophical mores arising out of Enlightenment thinking could be applied by governments and community leaders to social problems or social advancement. John Gascoigne observes that while utilitarianism was ‘one of the most efficient routes to the more generalised goal of improvement ... European Australians were to discover that the extent to which such progress could be achieved was limited’.² Difficulties in effectively recreating institutions that had operated successfully at ‘Home’ were complex and manifest. They often resulted in outright failure, or substantial change from the received model. The ways in which Australian culture has emerged from multiple

¹ M Wyatt, ‘A local studies experience: applying British principles to Australian conditions’, *The Local Studies Librarian*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1989, p. 3.

² J Gascoigne, *The enlightenment and the origins of European Australia*, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2002, p. 171.

sources and changed according to local conditions has been central to recent scholarship in the field of cultural history in Australia.³ David Goodman has identified a significant change in the way cultural historians have approached Australian history, moving from a desire to identify emerging colonial difference from the (British) metropolitan society, towards a deeper understanding of the translation of metropolitan cultural forms to the colonial situation, as appropriations with specific local cultural consequences.⁴ In the same vein, cultural historian Richard Waterhouse has suggested that:

Australian culture is neither the product of organic growth nor of imposed hegemony. Nor are our values and institutions the unwavering product of a 200-year old fragment. Rather, contemporary Australian society and culture are the results of a continuing series of cultural imports constantly reworked to meet local circumstances, and of a dynamic set of internal transcultural exchanges.⁵

These understandings of ‘cultural transplantation’ are a useful starting point for considering the development of the public library in the colonies of Australia, prior to the act of federation that instituted the nation-state of Australia in 1901.⁶

This chapter first examines archival aspects of the British public library model adopted in the Australian colonies, in order to more clearly articulate the divergence and subsequent reworking of the model. It considers the degree to which the public library in Australia diverged from the archival model of the British public library in the context of the absence of centralised ‘state’ archives and the close relationship between colonial public libraries and museums. The

³ See for example the compilation of essays in R White and H-M Teo, *Cultural history in Australia*, Sydney, 2003.

⁴ D Goodman, 'Desiring land in gold-rush Victoria', in D Merwick (ed.), *Dangerous liaisons: essays in honour of Greg Denning*, Parkville, Vic., 1994, p. 213.

⁵ R Waterhouse, 'Cultural transmissions', in White and Teo, *Cultural history in Australia*, p. 117.

⁶ The value of addressing the ‘derivative’ nature of Australian culture (high and popular) is found in the work of many key Australian historians. John Rickard, for example, suggests that in seeking to write about Australian culture, he seeks to ‘avoid the well-trodden path of the quest for national identity — or at least to be able to place it in some broader cultural context, instead focusing on ‘the process of immigration and cultural transplantation’: J Rickard, 'Cultural history: the "high" and the "popular"', in SL Goldberg and FB Smith (eds.), *Australian cultural history*, Cambridge, UK; Melbourne, 1988, p. 187. John Hirst also addresses this as a central theme, finding that ‘[o]ur task as Australian historians is to understand a dependent culture’: J Hirst, *Sense & nonsense in Australian history*, Melbourne, 2005, p. 123.

chapter then introduces the Tasmanian Public Library as the key thesis example, examining the institution from its establishment up to the 1880s. Tasmanians found in print culture a way to retain a sense of intellectual connection to the northern hemisphere, its politics and ideas, and Britishness. They also found in print culture the means to begin to express something of the nature of their new identity as a community within the British dominions, and the beginning of recognition of the role that a cultural literary heritage could play in the formation of regional identity.

In the last two decades of the nineteenth century the various libraries in Hobart — and the Tasmanian Public Library in particular — were a central conduit of print culture, and the evolution of Tasmania's own liberal archive. Yet there were to be challenges and complications to this evolution. Discussion in this chapter focuses on the degree to which the institution recreated the institutional values and practices of its British prototype, under the direction of 'liberal' librarian Alfred Joseph Taylor. The chapter concludes by demonstrating how this situation gradually changed in the last decades of the nineteenth century. The growth of local history married with liberal sentiment stimulated the public library to perform a more energetic custodial role in its community, as part of a wider practice of institutionalising the local past.

The development of the liberal archive in Britain

Mid-nineteenth-century liberalism, involving a combination of idealism and utilitarianism, has been recognised as a key ingredient in the formation of the state-funded free public library system in Britain.⁷ The public library was designed to encourage individuals to take responsibility for their own self-improvement by practising 'self-culture', guiding the acquisition of knowledge

⁷ Recent published work in library history has significantly expanded our understanding of ways in which the nineteenth-century public library enacted the liberal state's philosophy of social organization. See A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996; T Augst, 'Faith in libraries: public libraries, liberalism, and the civil religion', in T Augst and KE Carpenter (eds.), *Institutions of reading: the social life of libraries in the United States*, Amherst, 2007, pp. 148-183; M Hewitt, 'Confronting the modern city: the Manchester Free Public Library, 1850-80', *Urban History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2000, pp. 62-88; and P Joyce, *The rule of freedom: liberalism and the modern city*, London; New York, 2003.

and taste in its role as moral guardian.⁸ The public library could ‘teach people to teach themselves’ and ‘help people to help themselves’. This was to be achieved through freedom of access to the building, direct access to the shelves, use of catalogues, and the organisation of physical space to facilitate publicly acceptable behaviour through observation and self-regulation. It opened the communication of liberal middle-class values and norms of character and propriety up to a wider section of society, deliberately embracing the working classes.⁹

Of most interest to this thesis is the way in which the British public library maintained a role of fostering a sense of community, both local and national in character. This was to be achieved (in general terms) through the communication of liberal values to its users,¹⁰ and specifically by presenting the community with information about itself in the form of its collections relating to the nation and the region. Alistair Black writes that ‘the emergence of the public library was part and parcel of the growing realisation that to reform and regulate a burgeoning population and its connected problems the first step was to accumulate, in an accessible repository, knowledge and data on the norms, habits and conduct of the new [middle-class] society’.¹¹ Patrick Joyce has most explicitly conceptualised this ‘archival’ aspect of the nineteenth-century public library, as being central to its function as a political technology of liberal governmentality.¹² Joyce suggests that, while library scholarship has acknowledged the importance of ‘cultivation of self’ to the mission of the nineteenth-century public library, the imperative that ‘knowing one’s society was a prerequisite to knowing one’s self’ is less recognised as a crucial part of the public library’s mission.¹³

⁸ Augst, ‘Faith in libraries’, p.173.

⁹ Patrick Joyce suggests that the public library helped to constitute new meanings of ‘public’, related not only to the production of a free institution available to all members of society, but also in the constitution of the working class as ‘demotic’, by giving this class access to the public realm: P Joyce, ‘The politics of the liberal archive’, *History of the human sciences*, vol. 12, no. 3, 1999, p. 39.

¹⁰ See Augst, ‘Faith in libraries’.

¹¹ Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 70

¹² Joyce, ‘The politics of the liberal archive’, p. 35.

¹³ Joyce, ‘The politics of the liberal archive’, p. 39.

The types of collections that the public library formed are central to Joyce's argument. The clear local emphasis in the public library promoting strong regional associations always operated in relation to national identifications, 'just as liberalism was itself about the balance of the local and the national state', Joyce writes.¹⁴ He argues:

The inclusiveness made possible by the copyright privileges of the British Museum enshrined the universality of knowledge, an aspiration of course which was an age-old one, though one to which liberalism gave a new twist in the 19th century. The belief in a universal human nature was expressed nonetheless in the peculiarities of the local. Local libraries attempted to copy this universal coverage, though always with the characteristic sense of their mission to represent the local.¹⁵

Helen Meller similarly characterises the public library as a 'means for the interaction of local, regional and national culture'.¹⁶

Joyce considers that the origins of the public library as liberal archive in Great Britain lie in the 1850 Public Libraries Act. While the Public Record Office (founded in 1838) and the library collections of the British Museum were theoretically 'public' archives, access by the public to both institutions was limited. Particularly in the case of the Public Record Office, documents consisted of 'state records rather than material which was about and created by the population at large'.¹⁷ The public libraries established after 1850, particularly in the form of the major provincial libraries in cities such as Manchester and Liverpool, were the first to archive and promote materials which could relate more directly to the individual liberal citizen's understanding of self within the national and local community. They also made these materials more generally accessible across class boundaries.

¹⁴ Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive', p. 40.

¹⁵ Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive', p. 41.

¹⁶ HE Meller, 'The leisure revolution', in M Kinnell and RP Sturges (eds.), *Continuity and innovation in the public library: the development of a social institution*, London, 1996, p. 11.

¹⁷ Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive', p. 38.

The Select Committee on the Provision of Public Libraries (1849) recommended that every locality should have a 'special library', 'illustrative of the peculiar trade, manufactures, and agriculture of the place, and greatly favourable to the practical development of the science of political economy'.¹⁸ Topographical collections in the principal provincial libraries were also recommended, 'where history may find a faithful portraiture of local events, local literature, and local manners; and art and science a collection of all objects illustrative of the soil, climate and resources of the surrounding country'.¹⁹ These recommendations were put in place in the new free libraries that were established in Britain from the 1850s. Diana Dixon, in her study of local studies collections in Britain, has found that of the twenty-seven free public libraries founded by 1868, all 'boasted fine local collections from the start'.²⁰ Local history and an interest in the dialect and customs of the people were characteristic. These local collections did not just complement civic unity, they also 'safeguarded the past cultural achievement of the locality' and its citizens' ancestors.²¹

The issue of the collection of a local archive in the public library remained important to the activities and concerns of public librarians through the last decades of the nineteenth century. As Nicola Smith has observed, librarians utilised the formation of local collections, particularly local history, as a way of legitimising their new (and often uncertain) professional status.²² William HK Wright presented a paper on special local collections to a national forum during the first meeting of the Library Association of the United Kingdom in October 1878. In his paper, 'Special collections of local books in provincial libraries', Wright urged fellow librarians to collect local material, defined as 'having any connection with the district, whether descriptive of, or relating to, published in, or

¹⁸ Select Committee on the Provision of Public Libraries (1849), section 3393-3397, quoted in T Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1975*, London, 1977, p. 77.

¹⁹ Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain*, p. 77.

²⁰ D Dixon, 'Civic pride and posterity', *The Local Studies Librarian*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, p. 6.

²¹ Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 177. Dixon notes that 'Civic pride often manifested itself in judicious purchasing of material for the local studies collections': Dixon, 'Civic pride and posterity', p. 7.

²² See N Smith, 'Finding a place: librarians, local history and the search for professional and social status, 1890-1925', PhD Thesis, University of Sussex, 2006.

written by natives of, or sometime residents within, the limits of the district'.²³ Wright saw that not only would a 'large and valuable collection of books' be formed, but also there would be tangible benefits for the community. These benefits were in the increased interest 'awakened' in 'local as well as general literature', and in the encouragement given to local authors, literary workers and publishers.²⁴

Wright observed that while this was not a new idea (noting the fine local collections already formed in Manchester, Liverpool, Bristol, Leicester, and Birmingham) he considered there was still much to be done. This was not only in the ongoing acquisition of local materials, but also in the promotion of special collections to the public. Wright also urged improved documentation, noting that 'instances of special cataloguing of local books' were 'few and incomplete'.²⁵ He encouraged provincial libraries to emulate the 'course adopted and advocated by the authorities of the national libraries — seeking to gather within one building all the literature relating to the district we each represent'. In such a way 'in course of time collections of great value and immense importance would be formed'.²⁶ The meta-narrative of the comprehensive national collection was to be underpinned by localised narratives within regional or local collections. In practical terms, all this meant that by 1897 John Ogle could claim in his history of the free library in Britain that 'now there is hardly a free library of any importance where it is not recognised that the local collection is an important section'.²⁷

Although the example of the public library in North America was not an influential one for Australian libraries in the nineteenth century, it is important to recognise that American librarians also demonstrated active interest in the formation of local and national collections in public libraries.²⁸ As in Britain, this

²³ WHK Wright, *Special collections of local books in provincial libraries*, London, 1879-1890, p. 44.

²⁴ Wright, *Special collections of local books in provincial libraries*, p. 44.

²⁵ Wright, *Special collections of local books in provincial libraries*, p. 45.

²⁶ Wright, *Special collections of local books in provincial libraries*, p. 47.

²⁷ JJ Ogle, *The free library: its history and present condition*, [s.l.], 1897, p. 98.

²⁸ This will be discussed further in Ch. 2, in the context of the formation of national collections.

activity was often closely connected with local historical societies.²⁹ The issue of the formation of 'local' collections in public libraries was a topic that was frequently raised at American Library Association conventions after 1876. In 1889, the statement was made at the convention that '[e]very town library must collect exhaustively and preserve tenaciously any book, pamphlet, map, placard, poster, every scrap of written or printed matter relating to that town and less exhaustively to the neighbouring towns'.³⁰ This directive was not contemplated in Australia for another decade, and not comprehensively acted upon for much longer.

The Australian public library as a derivative institution

In his *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, published in 1886, British barrister CW Holgate wrote that 'while the Colonies remain bound to us by the strong ties of kinship and sentiment, and while England is still "home" to them, their institutions, modelled in many cases on our own, look for encouragement and support from kindred institutions in the old country'.³¹ This was undoubtedly true. The establishment of the principal state-supported free public libraries in each of the colonies in colonial Australia was closely associated with the dissemination of the liberal model of the English public library, based on philosophies imported by those cultural advocates who had observed the benefits of this type of institution in England. The establishment of these libraries, and the closely related institutions of the public museum and art gallery, was a product of 'intense moral seriousness' emerging from the colonial bourgeoisie, who sought to promote liberal values of access and guidance of the democratic citizen of all classes.³²

The major 'state' libraries were closely modeled on the 'national library idea', in Australian librarian John Metcalfe's words, seeking to provide a universal

²⁹ For an extensive discussion of an early example of this at the Louisiana State Library, see F Phillips, 'To "Build upon the foundation": Charles Gayarré's vision for the Louisiana State Library', *Libraries & the Cultural Record*, vol. 43, no. 1, 2008, pp. 56-76.

³⁰ See G Pearson, 'The development and role of local history collections in Australian public libraries', *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1988, p. 29.

³¹ CW Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, London, 1886, p. 9.

³² R White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, 1981, p. 60.

collection and a literary moral compass.³³ The British Museum library was the central organisational and philosophical model for the major colonial libraries in Australia, well into the twentieth century.³⁴ Their book stock reflected the prevailing Anglophile literature preferences, sources of supply and attitudes to fiction provision. The Australian efforts to emulate the free public library ideal were noted with approval at 'Home'. Key contemporary library commentator Thomas Greenwood praised the Australian take-up of the free library ideal in 1887, noting that 'our own Australasian Colonies are setting us an example which in many respects we might follow with advantage to the great mother country'.³⁵ Greenwood observed that '[e]ven little Tasmania can publish its annual Parliamentary report of its Public Libraries, giving in the last issue the names of twenty-nine libraries aided by a government grant, varying in amounts up to £50'.³⁶

Yet, as noted above, the colonial Australian public libraries differed greatly from those in England in their inconsistency in performing the liberal project of archiving the locality and the nation. Nor was there an alternative unified government archival apparatus for the preservation of local, regional or national manuscripts and paper records.³⁷ Unsurprisingly, individual colonies maintained

³³ J Metcalfe, 'Library development in Australia: a case study of development in a colonial and continental country', in LR McColvin and RF Vollans (eds.), *Libraries for the people: international studies in librarianship in honour of Lionel R. McColvin*, London, 1968, p. 135. Librarian, academic and Tasmanian Public Library trustee E Morris Miller confirmed the dominance of this model in his 1928 paper concerning public library services. Miller argued that while the state libraries had an important function as 'storehouses of books', this function should not dominate library services. He considered it 'utter folly to extend the British Museum idea any further in Australia': EM Miller, 'The relation of state and municipal libraries', in *Proceedings of the Australian library conference: held at the University of Melbourne, August, 1928*, Melbourne, 1928, p. 34.

³⁴ HCL Anderson, principal librarian of the Public Library of New South Wales, was the first Australian librarian actively to promote American public library philosophy, influencing younger librarians such as E Morris Miller.

³⁵ T Greenwood, *Free public libraries: their organisation, uses, and management*, London, 1887, (2nd edition), p. xi.

³⁶ Greenwood, *Free public libraries*, p. 215.

³⁷ For a history of the archiving of government records in Australia, see H Golder, *Documenting a nation: Australian Archives - the first fifty years*, Canberra, 1994. See also M Piggott, 'Beginnings', in SM McKemmish and M Piggott (eds.), *The records continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years*, Clayton, Vic., 1994, pp. 1-17. Piggott finds that the 'new nation's administrative machinery did not include a national archives or public records office', and that up to the Second World War 'successive Australian governments saw no cultural or administrative reason to compel them to establish an archives or a records regime'. Piggott, like

their own local records systems, such as the Registrar-General in the colony of Victoria,³⁸ or the Chief Secretary's Department in Tasmania.³⁹ Government record keeping was prone to be 'fickle' and 'political' and somewhat 'haphazard', in Anne Curthoys' words.⁴⁰ Curthoys notes that even by the 1870s there were 'no archival repositories like those in the United Kingdom, Canada, and South Africa; historians wishing to consult outdated government records had to gain special permission to do so'.⁴¹ Archiving of records such as those of government officials and other colonial institutions such as missionary societies typically occurred outside of the colonies, in the headquarters of these institutions. The Public Record Office in London held a substantial proportion of Australian colonial records, a situation that occupied the attention of early historians such as James Bonwick in the late nineteenth century, and Australian librarians and early archivists in the twentieth century, as later chapters of this thesis show.

The principal public libraries that became the state libraries in each of the Australian states in the twentieth century *did* collect local and proto-national materials, explicitly or accidentally, in the nineteenth century. However, it was not until the late nineteenth century that the practice became a prominent part of the collecting practices of any institution. It is important to note that there was no lack of material that could be acquired: John Ferguson's *Bibliography of Australia* includes some 3,300 titles related to Australia, printed either in Australia or

Golder, finds that the 'most sustained pressure for formal provision for archives in the first four decades came from within the Commonwealth Parliament's Library' (pp. 2-4). P Biskup, *Debates and discourses: selected Australian writings on archival theory, 1951-1990*, Canberra, 1995, provides a selection of theoretical writings on archive history in Australia dating from the 1950s to the present. These demonstrate the central importance of public libraries to archiving practice in the first half of the twentieth century. See Chapter 7 for further discussion.

³⁸ The role of Registrar-General in Victoria was established by William Henry Archer in 1853. Under this aegis the social demography of the colony was successfully archived such that the colony achieved, according to EW Russell, a 'sound and extensive inheritance of official records' (p. 6): EW Russell and CL Farrugia, *A matter of record: a history of Public Record Office Victoria*, Nth Melbourne, 2003, esp. Ch. 1.

³⁹ 'Our record office. Nothing like it in the other states', *Mercury* (Hobart), 3 February 1905, p. 3.

⁴⁰ A Curthoys, 'The history of killing and the killing of history', in A Burton (ed.), *Archive stories: facts, fictions, and the writing of history*, Durham, NC, 2005, p. 364.

⁴¹ Curthoys, 'The history of killing and the killing of history', p. 363.

offshore, in the first 60 years of settlement.⁴² The major state libraries in Melbourne and Sydney archived the locality to the greatest degree of all the libraries, in the nineteenth century. Others had no professed or active interest in archiving the locality to any degree. Where local archives did emerge in the nineteenth century, it is clear that philanthropy was the key stimulus and principal means by which the colonial collections were established and enriched. This aspect of the development of the will to archive in the major reference libraries is analysed in depth in Chapters 3 and 4.

Inconsistencies in archiving the locality in the Australian state libraries

The Public Library of New South Wales has distinguished itself since the 1860s for acquiring substantial local and national collections. Although in its earliest incarnation, as the Australian Subscription Library, the institution did not collect productions of the local press, because they were ‘neither extensive, expensive, nor difficult to obtain’ in comparison to the high-class English books and periodicals which were its mainstay,⁴³ the substantial bequest of politician and judge Edward Wise in 1865 encouraged a new archival function. Wise’s bequest consisted of nearly one thousand volumes of books, newspapers, pamphlets and manuscripts. It became the basis of the institution’s Australiana collection. Librarian RC Walker encouraged the enrichment of this aspect of the collection. By 1893, when Walker retired, the Australiana collection numbered some 13,000 items and was a source of pride for the trustees, who claimed that it was ‘immensely larger than that of any other Library in the world, except possibly that of the British Museum’.⁴⁴ With limited funds the trustees used ‘intelligent selection’ to enhance the national collection, claiming to give ‘very special attention to everything Australian; not especially Australian literature, but any

⁴² John Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia*, Canberra, 1975, 7 volumes. DH Borchardt first made this observation: DH Borchardt, ‘Libraries and printed resources’, in V Crittenden and DH Borchardt (eds.), *Australians, a guide to sources*, Broadway, NSW, 1987, p. 41.

⁴³ FM Bladen, quoted in GD Richardson, *The colony's quest for a national library*, Sydney, 1960, p. 18.

⁴⁴ Quoted in Richardson, *The colony's quest for a national library*, p. 18. For a description of Walker’s passion for the Australiana collection, see ‘Hours in a Library’, *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 23 September 1893, p. 5.

book, pamphlet, or document published in or referring to the colonies'.⁴⁵ The success of the Sydney library in forwarding this activity in the nineteenth century carried through in the twentieth century, when HCL Anderson actively engaged with local bibliophile David Scott Mitchell to ensure the bequest of Mitchell's enormous Australiana collection to the library in 1907.⁴⁶

The Melbourne Public Library also acquired Australian materials in the nineteenth century, though less decisively and successfully. In marked contrast to the British Libraries established in the same period, when the Melbourne Public Library opened to the public its collections contained 'not a single volume on Australian affairs' and indeed '[all] the great eras of history were blank'.⁴⁷ Charles Gavan Duffy, who made these observations (and later became a trustee of the library) considered that in 1856 the Melbourne Public Library 'was as yet strangely unfit for its position in the capital of a new country'.⁴⁸ In the nineteenth century the library 'acquired the reputation of emphasizing British and European material at the expense of the Australian collections'.⁴⁹ The *Melbourne Age* newspaper reported in January 1879 that 'the colonial department is notoriously incomplete and that of our own colony ... the most meagre'.⁵⁰

In response to press criticism, the trustees invited the local press to a special viewing of the library's colonial collection in May 1879. Presented with a display of the entirety of the colonial collection, the correspondent for the Melbourne *Argus* was impressed, writing that '[p]osterity will have no reason to complain that the founders of this institution neglected to procure and preserve every book,

⁴⁵ 'The free public library. How and what people read', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1895, p. 3.

⁴⁶ For a summary of Anderson's relationship with Mitchell, see DJ Jones, 'Friendly relations: Anderson, Mitchell and the book trade', in E Morrison and M Talbot (eds.), *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia: papers from the forum on Australian colonial library history held at Monash University 1-2 June, 1984*, Clayton, Vic., 1985, pp. 83-90.

⁴⁷ Quoted in D McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria, 1853-1974', MA Thesis, Monash University, 1975, p. 24.

⁴⁸ McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', p. 24.

⁴⁹ McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', p. 39.

⁵⁰ Quoted in McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', p. 47. Mid-twentieth-century nationalist Australian historian Manning Clark was critical of the library's efforts to stock Australian literature, considering it a 'slavish imitation of the Old World' at the expense of local material: CMH Clark, *A history of Australia*, vol. IV, 1979, p. 224.

pamphlet, or document relating to the early history of Australia, the language, manners and customs of its aboriginal inhabitants, and the progress of geographical discovery in and around these colonies'. The correspondent suggested that the 'historian of the year 2000 will be embarrassed by the abundance instead of being perplexed by the scarcity of materials out of which to construct his narrative of the times in which we live'.⁵¹ In 1882 librarian Thomas Francis Bride advised trustees that publications from the Australian colonies would be 'diligently collected and deposited in the Library'.⁵² When CW Holgate undertook his account of Australian libraries in 1886, he reported that in the Melbourne library, which he considered 'one of the chief marvels of Australia', 'the collections of ... works on the Australian colonies are particularly good'.⁵³

Nevertheless, Tony Marshall has described as 'desultory and passive' the acquisition of Australian historical documents for the Melbourne Public Library in the nineteenth century and first decades of the twentieth century.⁵⁴ The first purchase of Australian manuscript material by the library (as opposed to receipt of donations) did not occur until 1913.⁵⁵ Jock Murphy concludes that '[j]udged by today's standards, it is hard to avoid the conclusion that for a long time the library failed to accept its responsibilities in relation to the collection of Australian archival materials. It was not until the mid twentieth century that one can observe any significant commitment to this work.'⁵⁶

In the other colonial libraries that were not fortunate to receive major philanthropic support, the acquisition of the local archive was further retarded.

⁵¹ 'The Public Library', *Argus* (Melbourne), 3 May 1879, p. 5.

⁵² McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria, 1853-1974', p. 72.

⁵³ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, pp. 20, 19.

⁵⁴ T Marshall, 'The Australian manuscript collection', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 12, nos. 47 & 48, 1992, p. 76. This passivity can be seen in the published catalogue of the Melbourne Public Library for 1880, which did not list the few items of what would now be considered significant Australian manuscript material in the library collection. See J Murphy, 'The development of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at the State Library of Victoria', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1998, p. 338.

⁵⁵ The purchased item was WF Liardet's manuscript notes for a history of Victoria. See Murphy, 'The development of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at the State Library of Victoria', p. 338.

⁵⁶ Murphy, 'The development of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at the State Library of Victoria', p. 341.

The principal colonial library in Perth, in the colony of Western Australia, which came to have a very strong archival function in the early twentieth century, did not actively seek to acquire this type of material until the late 1890s.⁵⁷ The poor local collection in the Perth library, where written histories and other colonial historical records were almost entirely absent, was compared in the local press with the rich local and regional collections in libraries in the northern hemisphere. The *West Australian* correspondent noted that:

In the archives, public libraries, and museums of the great majority of the cities and towns of England and the Continent are to be found a few volumes and manuscripts in which are recorded the history of those cities and states... These volumes are guarded with jealous care and estimated as of almost priceless worth. Can there be any doubt that in years to come a reliable history of this colony would be equally valuable?⁵⁸

Similarly, the principal library in Queensland, in the city of Brisbane, did not specifically acquire local or national material after it opened in 1896 until an Australiana collection was established in the 1930s.⁵⁹ The Tasmanian Public Library also had no intent to archive the locality until the late nineteenth century, as will be described below. This lack of interest in local collecting was replicated in the regional free libraries in the colonies. At the East Ballarat library, which was one of the largest and most successful of the colonial free libraries, Peter Mansfield has found that Australiana was 'poorly represented'.⁶⁰ Mansfield demonstrates that of the fifty-three most important Australian books published between 1885 and 1899, as identified in *The Macmillan anthology of Australian literature* (1990), the Ballarat East Free Library had purchased only one third of

⁵⁷ T Reynolds and C Coggin, 'The State Archives of Western Australia', in RC Sharman and LA Clyde (eds.), *Western perspectives: library and information services in Western Australia*, Perth, WA, 1990, p. 166. Librarian JS Battye stated the new aim of making 'works on Australia' a 'speciality' of the library in the local press for the first time in 1896: 'The Victoria Public Library', *West Australian* (Perth), 31 December 1896, p. 2.

⁵⁸ Robert Harris, 'A history of Western Australia', *West Australian*, 12 May 1897, p. 7.

⁵⁹ See P Biskup, 'Australiana in Brisbane between the wars: a fairy tale for grown-ups', in F Upward and JP Whyte (eds.), *Peopling a profession: papers from the fourth forum on Australian library history*, Monash University 25 and 26 September 1989, Clayton, Vic., 1991, pp. 75-92.

⁶⁰ P Mansfield, 'Public libraries in Ballarat: 1851-1900', MA Thesis, Deakin University, 2000, p. 183.

the titles by the end of the nineteenth century.⁶¹ Mansfield suggests that Australiana was 'probably not in many colonial libraries'.⁶² Fitzroy Public Library in inner Melbourne, which opened in 1877, made efforts in 1879 to form a department of Australasian literature, but this was 'an unusual venture for the time', as Carole Woods has observed.⁶³

Understanding the failure to archive

Useful insights into this relative failure to archive the locality in the Australian public library can be gained by comparing libraries with Australian state museums in the same period. These institutions shared a philosophical purpose to promote rational and scientific thought and a liberal civilising mission, and maintained a liberal attitude to public access. In practical terms the public library, museum and state archives share a closely intertwined history in Australia. The public libraries in three of the colonies of Australia (Victoria, South Australia, then Western Australia) were established in conjunction with a public museum and art gallery, sharing a building and trustees.⁶⁴ Those major public libraries established without direct connections to museums, such as the Tasmanian Public Library, were often indirectly related in various ways, with individuals frequently acting as trustees on both institutional boards.

Much insightful work has been undertaken in museology relating to colonial museums, particularly by Tony Bennett and Chris Healy and Tom Griffiths. These scholars have identified an absence of history in state-funded colonial museums,

⁶¹ Mansfield, 'Public libraries in Ballarat', p. 183.

⁶² Mansfield, 'Public libraries in Ballarat', p. 183.

⁶³ C Woods, 'Thomas Ewing and the Fitzroy Public Library', in *Fitzroy: Melbourne's first suburb*, South Yarra, Vic., 1989, p. 57.

⁶⁴ This was also the case in the British public library in its foundation period, as GK Peatling has discussed in the context of shared influences of nationalism in the library. See GK Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain, 1850-1919', *Library History*, vol. 20 no. 1, 2004, pp. 33-47. Dilevko and Gottlieb note a similar phenomenon in American public library/museum partnerships in the nineteenth century. See J Dilevko and L Gottlieb, *The evolution of library and museum partnerships: historical antecedents, contemporary manifestations, and future directions*, Westport, Conn., 2004. The close association between the public library and public museum in urban centres was also often to be found in rural and urban areas in Australia. Many Mechanics' Institutes, for example, established a museum or art gallery in conjunction with their library function. See P Candy, '"The light of heaven itself": the contribution of the institutes to Australia's cultural history', in PC Candy and J Laurent (eds.), *Pioneering culture: mechanics' institutes and schools of art in Australia*, Adelaide, 1994, p. 12.

which in other ways closely paralleled the disciplinary ambit of their European counterparts.⁶⁵ Bennett finds that these ‘patterns of Australian exceptionalism’ in the activities of the colonial Australian museum reveal themselves most starkly in comparison with Europe, where ‘the use of museums as a means of representing and embodying national histories’ was of long-standing.⁶⁶ Similarly, Healy finds that there was typically science and natural history, technology and art, but ‘not one of these colonial museums held a significant collection of historical material’.⁶⁷ Where historical material was present, these collections were ‘small and strange’, consisting of artefacts relating to Aborigines, and document collections principally constituted by personal records of preeminent colonial settlers.⁶⁸ Australian colonial museums declined to take an active role in representing ‘the past’ to its visitors (through narrative, display, categorisation or classification): neither the past as experienced in the colonies, nor the past as a reflection of British origins.

In his work on the evolution of the historical imagination in Australia, Tom Griffiths argues that the rise of antiquarianism in Australia in the late nineteenth century that prompted a more active historical consciousness in the community did not impact upon museums to any significant degree until the early twentieth century.⁶⁹ As late as 1933, when the Carnegie Corporation of New York commissioned a study of public museums and art galleries of Australia, the authors of the report were surprised to find ‘an almost total lack of interest in either collecting or exhibiting historical materials’, only two museums in the country being devoted to historical exhibits.⁷⁰ The authors considered remarkable the ‘lack of any developed concern with materials relating to the post-settlement period’.⁷¹

⁶⁵ See C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997; T Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, London; New York, 1995; and T Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1996.

⁶⁶ Bennett, *The birth of the museum*, p. 136.

⁶⁷ Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism*, p. 86.

⁶⁸ Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism*, p. 93.

⁶⁹ See Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*.

⁷⁰ Bennett, *The birth of the museum*, p. 135.

⁷¹ Ibid.

In seeking an explanation for this historical 'exceptionalism' in the Australian museum, a number of scholars have suggested that attitudes to what constituted the past for the colonies were key. Colonial Australians, Healy suggests, carried a notion that 'their country was without history'.⁷² In the last half of the nineteenth century, a period in which Europe was actively constructing its past, the Australian public historical sphere (defined as the set of institutions and practices in which history is publicly articulated and reiterated) was undeveloped and scarcely nationalised.⁷³ In fact, historian Michael Bennett suggests that the new and invigorated attitude to English and British heritage that had developed in Britain in this period had the effect of further complicating colonial Australians' attitudes to history, and their political and cultural aspirations.⁷⁴ Similarly, Tony Bennett notes that:

...the post-settlement period, when viewed from the comparative perspective of European national pasts, was regarded as a vacuum — or if not as a vacuum, as a period whose events and figures often proved difficult to use in the construction of an autonomized national past owing to their prior association with the longer history of the British state.⁷⁵

These colonial perspectives on the past articulated in terms of museum history help to illuminate the relative absence of history in the Australian public library. The Australian public library, as part of the wider public historical sphere, was

⁷² Chris Healy, "Histories and collecting: museums, objects and memories," p. 39.

⁷³ T Bennett, 'History on the rocks', in J Frow and M Morris (eds.), *Australian cultural studies: a reader*, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, p. 236. What might seem the most obvious impediment to the installation of a 'nationing' history in the colonial museum was the absence of a unified nation-state prior to the federation of the Australian colonies in 1901. However, Healy stresses that we should not underestimate the extent to which the regionalised pride associated in the progress of each of the individual Australian colonies in the nineteenth century was 'prototypical of nationalism': Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism*, p. 87. It is also important to remember that there were motions to express a sense of national past in the nineteenth century, prior to Federation, mostly emerging from the very first historical societies. The first, the short-lived Historical Society of Australasia, formed in Melbourne in the colony of Victoria in 1885, had as its aims 'the cultivation and advancement of the study of History, and especially as it relates to Australasian colonies, and the collection of information for the compilation of a complete and accurate History of Australasia'. This society, as Tom Griffiths observes, was a 'brief institutional expression of Melbourne's lively, nationalistic literary scene' of the 1880s: Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, pp. 200-202.

⁷⁴ M Bennett, 'The heritage of "Old England"', in M Lake (ed.), *Memory, monuments and museums: the past in the present*, Carlton, Vic., 2006, p. 90.

⁷⁵ Bennett, *The birth of the museum*, p. 137.

unable actively to 'territorialise' history through archival collections that specifically reflected regional and wider colonial (proto-national) identifications.⁷⁶ In his promotion of the liberal aspects of the public library, Melbourne Public Library trustee Redmond Barry had emphasised a generalised archival role of the institution, which gave users access to their traditions and multiple sources of culture. He reportedly rejected the 'trite saying, that Australia has no history [because it] disregards the principles which should make the history of man embrace all common to humanity, and dwarfs it to the dimensions of a parish register', asking whether we are 'to be divorced from all that connects us with the countries from which we have come?'⁷⁷

Concerned with the transference of a liberal reverence for historical progress, Barry's comment emphasises a key problem with the development of the liberal archive in the Australian public library: which history was the liberal archive to collect and promote? Was the history of the metropolis to be privileged over colonial history? Inevitably, in the context of what Marilyn Lake has described as the 'anxiety of colonial exile and the fear of being forgotten at home',⁷⁸ the first priority was to recreate a library collection that signified the metropolis and spoke to an identity that was clearly attached to 'Home'. Only when this need had been fulfilled could the archive begin to speak of 'otherness', and to the complex understandings of the colonial self.

The delay of the colonies of Australia in developing centralised 'state' archives or strong archival functions in its public library system at the local and regional level is less puzzling when these complex social and cultural factors are considered. Francis Blouin and William Rosenberg have observed that the great archival

⁷⁶ Tony Bennett applies the conceptualisation of Nicos Poulantzas (*State, power, socialism*, London, 1980) at length in the context of the state funded museum promoting a particular view of history. Both scholars find the modern state promoting a particular relationship between history and territory, promoting a unified vision of the nation-state in the form of 'historicity of a territory and territorialisation of a history': Bennett, *The birth of the museum*, p. 141.

⁷⁷ Redmond Barry, quoted in W Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and libraries', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 73, 2004, p. 60.

⁷⁸ Marilyn Lake, 'Monuments, museums and memory', in *The companion to Tasmanian history* (online), http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/M/Monuments.htm, accessed 12 February 2009.

systems of Western Europe were ‘born of a certainty in the clarity of national purpose and the importance of history as a source of validation for national self-definition’.⁷⁹ In the absence of these certainties, the colonial archive in Australia had a belated birth. When the impetus to archive finally arrived in the colonies it emerged in the paradigm of *local* history, setting aside larger proto-national meta-narratives. These developments will now be explored in relation to the Tasmanian Public Library.

The dissemination of print culture in southern Tasmania in the 19th century

Hobart, the principal city of the British penal colony of Van Diemen’s Land (renamed Tasmania in 1856), had a publicly accessible library from 1825 in the form of the Wesleyan Chapel Library. In 1827 the establishment in Hobart of the first Mechanics’ Institute in Australia, with its library, provided further library access to the populace, with a strong utilitarian focus designed to assist in the acquisition of useful knowledge and the provision of opportunities for rational recreation.⁸⁰ From 1837, a new period of liberalism was initiated in the colony with the Lieutenant-Governorship of John Franklin and his wife Jane Franklin, based on the belief that through education and self-improvement the ‘common people could achieve a well-ordered, moral, and comfortable life’.⁸¹ Franklin boosted state provision of education, and encouraged popular attachment-to-place. This liberal ‘attachment to place’ can be most clearly seen in Lady Franklin’s creation of a small museum on her estate ‘Lower Ancanthe’ in Lenah Valley outside Hobart, where she collected specimens of natural history and a small library. Rules of the Franklin Museum Library were that the books collected must be ‘illustrative of Tasmania and the neighbouring colonies’, ‘works written by

⁷⁹ FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg, 'Introduction Part IV: Archives, memory, and political culture', in FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, documentation, and institutions of social memory: essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 2006, p. 255.

⁸⁰ See S Petrow, 'A tale of two cities: mechanics' institutes in Hobart and Launceston', in Candy and Laurent, *Pioneering culture*, pp. 311-326.

⁸¹ Michael Roe, 'Episodes of thought', in *The companion to Tasmanian history* (online), http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/E/Episodes%20of%20Thought.htm, accessed 10 January 2009.

authors who are, or have been, inhabitants of Tasmania' and 'works printed and published in Tasmania unless of a kind objected to by the trustees'.⁸²

The Royal Society of Tasmania was established in the late 1840s. This institution was to become central to the development of historical consciousness in Tasmania in the late nineteenth century, exercising what Stuart Macintyre has characterised as a 'custodianship' over the island's past until the early twentieth century.⁸³ The Royal Society library was also active, like Lady Franklin's Museum, in its performance of place. It had by 1849 begun to form a collection that tied scientific interest with interest in locality. This library was intended to be a public collection creditable as a 'national undertaking', ensuring that the 'rich stores of knowledge accruing from the labours and researches of the learned and scientific in other parts of the world' was available to Tasmanians.⁸⁴ When the first Tasmanian Public Library was created in 1849, the Royal Society library adapted its collection policies, deciding to restrict its purchases to those of a 'scientific character', and made no further gestures towards making the collections available to the public.⁸⁵ The Royal Society library did acquire locally specific book collections, most relating to geography, flora and fauna and ethnology in this period.

The Tasmanian Public Library

The first incarnation of the Tasmanian Public Library came into being in a 'flush of colonial enthusiasm' in 1849.⁸⁶ Although given the nomenclature 'public

⁸² P Saunders, 'The Franklin Museum Library', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 4, no. 2, 1956, pp. 7-8.

⁸³ S Macintyre, '1992 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture: History, a school for state craft or, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?' *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1992, p. 114.

⁸⁴ Royal Society Report, 1848, quoted in EL Piesse, *The foundation and early work of the Society: with some account of earlier institutions and societies in Tasmania*, Hobart, 1913, p. 154.

⁸⁵ Levett has found that the Royal Society Library collection in the 1860s was 'pragmatic, technical and scientific' and that the Royal Society was 'more interested in acquiring, rather than organising and exploiting, its books and exhibits': J Levett, 'James Backhouse Walker, the "Mope-Hawk", and the Tasmanian Public Library - a cautionary tale from 1870', in G Winter (ed.), *Tasmanian insights: essays in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stilwell*, Hobart, 1992, p. 116. See also J Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869 the rise and fall of a colonial institution', MA Thesis, Monash University, 1984, p. 94.

⁸⁶ Levett, 'James Backhouse Walker, the "Mope-Hawk" and the Tasmanian Public Library', p. 113.

library', it operated as an élitist subscription library, opening with fourteen life members and 110 annual subscribers.⁸⁷ Trustees considered the library combined 'the advantages of a free public library with a circulating one'.⁸⁸ The colonial government contributed to book purchases. In John Levett's words the library was 'unashamedly middle class with upper class pretensions, sometimes courting vice-regal patronage, and run by the trustees, (who were ever "gentlemen") largely for their own'.⁸⁹ As it had been established and maintained by its committee, the library was 'inward-looking, classbound, and isolationist'.⁹⁰ As Levett observes, the philosophy of the library had no debt to the British public library model, the Tasmanian library 'being narrowly concerned with the property aspects of the "Public Library" and the right to sue and be sued'.⁹¹ Levett considers that the English example of a free public library did not grip the imagination of many in Tasmania because of crucial differences in the society, principally the disproportional representation of the 'labouring classes', a group whose nature was 'not thought to be amenable to improvement by coercion or education'.⁹²

Tasmanians coming of age in the 1860s and 1870s embraced new liberal ideals from Europe and the United States. Improved shipping from the northern hemisphere ensured that new books and recent journals reached the island colony more speedily and in greater quantities.⁹³ Library trustees were increasingly aware of the success of public library developments in Britain and in the other colonies, noting in 1863 'the attentions which these institutions are exciting' in 'Sydney and in England'.⁹⁴ The need to provide the general population with the tools for liberal enlightenment on the English model was more explicitly acknowledged. When financial problems forced the closure of the library in 1867, trustees and

⁸⁷ The library was typically gendered in its clientele, with a single woman listed among 54 men as the first members. Town and country members were encouraged to borrow books, with country members given double the loan period of their city counterparts as a concession to the difficulties of transport. *[A Catalogue] of [the] Tasmanian Public Library ... With the rules, regulations, etc.*, 1849.

⁸⁸ 'Tasmanian Public Library', *Mercury*, 9 January 1863, p. 2.

⁸⁹ John Levett, *The origins of the State Library of Tasmania*, Hobart, 1988, (n.p.).

⁹⁰ Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869', p. 79.

⁹¹ Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869', pp. 9-10.

⁹² Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869', p. 30.

⁹³ PF Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Canberra, 1973, p. 173.

⁹⁴ 'Tasmanian Public Library', *Mercury*, 9 January 1863, p. 2.

liberal-minded citizens were activated to re-open the institution on a model closer to the British free public library.⁹⁵ The new ‘municipalised’ Tasmanian Public Library was legally constituted through the Public Libraries Act 1867, allowing municipal councils to provide rate-supported libraries. The Hobart City Council maintained the library out of general rates, and from 1881 the Tasmanian government also provided an annual grant.⁹⁶ This combined council and state-funding model was a local peculiarity, a product of the particular attitudes to governance of the state in Tasmania. As Stefan Petrow notes, central government wanted to divest its responsibility for funding municipal services, and thus imposed more economical responsibilities on municipal government than was the case in other Australian colonies.⁹⁷ Eight library trustees were appointed by the Tasmanian Governor and the Hobart Municipal Corporation to manage the institution.

The revived and philosophically restructured, properly ‘public’, library re-opened in September 1870. The library occupied two newly constructed rooms in the west wing of the Hobart Town Hall, and was stocked with the volumes retained from the former library, which had been stored in an empty brewery in Collins Street.⁹⁸ The speeches at the inauguration clearly articulated key aspects of the development of the public library and its perceived role in the Tasmanian community. Governor Charles Du Cane made explicit connection with the precedents of the institution, noting that ‘in the great towns of England, no better and easier means of aiding that supplemental self-cultivation has been found than

⁹⁵ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 29; ‘Inauguration of the Tasmanian Public Library’, 5 September 1870, AA827/1/2, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

⁹⁶ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 29.

⁹⁷ Stefan Petrow, ‘The State’, in *The companion to Tasmanian history* (online), http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/S/The%20State.htm, accessed 12 January 2009. Tasmania’s public library was unusual among the principal libraries of the colonies because of this combination of state and municipal funding.

⁹⁸ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 29. Trustees of the former public library, Morton Allport and Thomas Chapman, had placed the bookstock remaining from the old library under the care of the municipal council ‘in the confident belief that they will then form the nucleus of a valuable Library, open to all, beneficial to the Public and creditable to the Colony’: Morton Allport and Thomas Chapman, letter to Municipal Council of Hobart Town, 30 October 1868, MCC16/24/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

by the establishment of Public Libraries'.⁹⁹ Du Cane emphasised the aspect of 'self-improvement' that was fundamental to Tasmanian society in the context of post-penal development. Du Cane articulated the virtues of a public library under three themes: the sacred philanthropic duty to cultivate the 'intellect which God has given us', the importance of a library in providing immediate tools for the education of the citizens in a young society ('as no new nation has ever risen to eminence which has neglected to provide at the outset for its intellectual cultivation'), and the dissemination of generalised intellectual heritage.¹⁰⁰ Nowhere, in the opening speeches, annual reports, or statements by library officials or promoters in the following decade was there articulated a specific desire to collect or promote local publications or materials relevant to the history of the district in the sense of creating an archive, as was apparent in the British public library.

The new library was reasonably well patronised. In 1871, its first year of operation, 25,675 visitors recorded their names in the Visitors Book.¹⁰¹ These numbers remained consistent in the next decades, CW Holgate reporting in 1886 that some 30,000 annual visits were made by what he described as the 'extremely limited' reading public in Hobart.¹⁰² Trustees were keen to assert the library's utility, claiming in 1872 that the reference collection was:

...a portion of the Institution which has proved a great boon to those interested in shipping, to mercantile men, and to the community generally; whilst visitors have expressed their gratification at finding here so useful, and, at the same time, so agreeable a place of resort. The Library, again, as an Educational medium, can scarcely be too highly valued; indeed it is daily made use of by those of our young men who are studying for the degrees and scholarships conferred under the Educational system of this Colony.¹⁰³

⁹⁹ 'Inauguration of the Tasmanian Public Library', 5 September 1870, AA827/1/2, TAHO, Hobart. No visitor's books from the nineteenth century have survived.

¹⁰⁰ 'Inauguration of the Tasmanian Public Library'.

¹⁰¹ Minutes of Annual Meeting of Trustees, 2 February 1872, in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1870 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰² Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 28.

¹⁰³ Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, printed petition to Mayor of Hobart, 11 December 1872, MCC16/24/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

Nevertheless, the library made no impact on English novelist Anthony Trollope when he visited Tasmania as part of his tour of the colonies of Australia in the early 1870s. Trollope, who had praised the Melbourne Public Library greatly in his account of his visit to that colony, did not mention the Tasmanian Public Library among his descriptions of other public amenities in Hobart.¹⁰⁴ The failure of the Tasmanian Public Library to advance significantly in prominence or community estimation can be partly blamed on the poor management of its long-term librarian, AJ Taylor.

AJ Taylor as liberal librarian

The first librarian of the reincarnated library was Samuel Hannaford. Hannaford was born in England in 1828 and arrived in Australia in 1852. He settled in the colony of Victoria and began an ‘immediate investigation’ of the fauna and flora, resulting in scientific papers for journals such as the *Journal of Australasia*, and an association as honorary secretary of the Horticultural Improvement Association in Geelong.¹⁰⁵ His move to Tasmania in the 1860s prompted a similar local enthusiasm. His leisure hours were ‘occasionally occupied’ with the production of the ‘nucleus of a guide book to Tasmania’, ‘a history of the bushranging times of Tasmania’, and ‘in a more congenial account of Tasmania’s flowers and plants’, the latter of which was published in the *Australian* newspaper.¹⁰⁶ His obituary notice considered that his ‘soul was in the work’ when he was appointed to the position of librarian at the resuscitated Tasmanian Public Library, but his interest in the island did not translate into enriching the library’s local collections in his four years in the position.

Alfred J Taylor, Hannaford’s successor, became deputy librarian in 1873. Taylor was passionate, intelligent and highly opinionated. Taylor was born in Tasmania in 1849, the son of a schoolteacher and an emancipated convict, Thomas Joseph Taylor, who was convicted of forging and uttering a cheque for £10 and arrived in

¹⁰⁴ A Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, London, 1873, vol. 2, pp. 51, 61.

¹⁰⁵ Obituary of S Hannaford, *Argus*, 9 January 1874, p. 5.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*

Tasmania as a felon in 1842.¹⁰⁷ In the hagiographic account of his life published by the Labor paper, the *World*, Taylor emerges as an energetic, self-educated autodidact.¹⁰⁸ By ‘borrowing books’, the *World* noted, ‘Mr Taylor was able to read incessantly and widely’. While still a teenager, his bookish tastes were rewarded with an appointment as the librarian at the subscription library in New Norfolk, a small farming and hop-growing settlement twenty kilometres upstream on the Derwent River from Hobart. Later, he ran his own mixed business of circulating library and stationery in Hobart. He became assistant librarian at the Tasmanian Public Library, and was appointed librarian after Hannaford’s death in 1873. Taylor was to remain in the position of chief librarian until his own death in 1921, ‘45 years spent in incessant labour in the cause of enlightenment and education’, according to the *World*.¹⁰⁹

Taylor wrote extensively in pamphlets and in local and mainland papers on subjects as diverse as criminal law, extension of the parliamentary franchise, reform in welfare and health systems, and ‘sociological questions generally’. He was passionate about education. He was instrumental in the establishment of technical education in Tasmania, and wrote a bi-monthly Tasmanian ‘School Journal’ from 1900 to 1902, including Tasmanian subjects such as ‘Our rocks and minerals’, ‘Our native animals’, and ‘Our birds’. Taylor was also prolific composer of essays and talks on a startling array of subjects to community bodies such as the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science, Hobart, and the Hobart Unitarian Church.¹¹⁰ Taylor also ran a museum of phrenology at his home at 28 Darcy Street, Hobart, the contents of which were sold to antiquarian

¹⁰⁷ M Roe’s notes on AJ Taylor, Special and Rare Materials Collection, UT66/1, University of Tasmania Library (hereafter UTL), Hobart. I thank Ralph Spaulding for drawing my attention to this material. See also LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania vol. II: colony and state from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1991, p. 77. See also M Roe, ‘Taylor, Alfred Joseph (1849-1921)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060262b.htm?hilit=taylor>, accessed 12 June 2008.

¹⁰⁸ AJ Taylor, *Forty-five years public librarian, Mr. Alfred J. Taylor: some incidents in his career, a many-sided and useful life*, Hobart, 1919, n.p.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Their titles give some indication of their variety: *Advice gratis: being friendly hints to parents touching the training and education of their children* (1885), *Notes on the value of labor in relation to the production of wealth, regarded from the standpoint of a physicist* (1892), *Imperial federation versus Australian independence* (1889), and *Death penalty: a plea for the abolition of capital punishment* (1912): *ibid.*

John Watt Beattie in 1922 after Taylor's death.¹¹¹ Taylor successfully speculated in the Western Tasmanian mining boom, which gripped the colony from the 1870s, becoming chairman of 'several' prospecting companies.¹¹² The 'riches' he gained 'melted away before his eyes' when the Bank of Van Diemen's Land collapsed in the Depression in 1891.

Taylor was a very public figure, active in a variety of political and social forums. Historian Henry Reynolds considers Taylor one of those who 'played prominent parts in the progressive movements' of the last quarter of the nineteenth century in Tasmania,¹¹³ along with key political figures and intellectuals such as Andrew Inglis Clark, Robert Mackenzie Johnston and FW Piesse. He was involved in various 'literary, benevolent, and scientific societies', including the Howard Association (a prison reform association formed in London in 1867), the Royal Colonial Institute (an institution set up to defend the British empire from its homeland critics in 1869, with a library established to supply information about the Empire and its colonies), and the Royal Society of Tasmania. Taylor participated in the Minerva Club, an intellectual liberal club in Hobart formed in the early 1870s.¹¹⁴ He was also a prominent member of the newly formed Southern Tasmanian Political Reform Association, which focused attention on manhood suffrage and electoral reform during the mid-1880s.¹¹⁵ Taylor was

¹¹¹ D Thomas, 'Making old Tasmania', in T Bonyhady and A Sayers (eds.), *Head of the people: a portrait of colonial Australia*, Canberra, 2000, pp. 92-93. In this activity Taylor was not unusual for the period. Michael Roe has found that 'many cultural leaders in Australia found phrenology an attractive study', encouraging an attitude that 'every personality required individual treatment' and understanding: M Roe, *Quest for authority in eastern Australia, 1835-1851*, Parkville, Vic., 1965, p. 161. Babette Smith has suggested that phrenology had a particular resonance in post-penal Tasmania, as a way to understand the criminal mind, and that it 'created a new and threatening context for the Australian colonies, which helped frame the attitudes of residents and visitors alike': B Smith, *Australia's birthstain: the startling legacy of the convict era*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2008, p. 281.

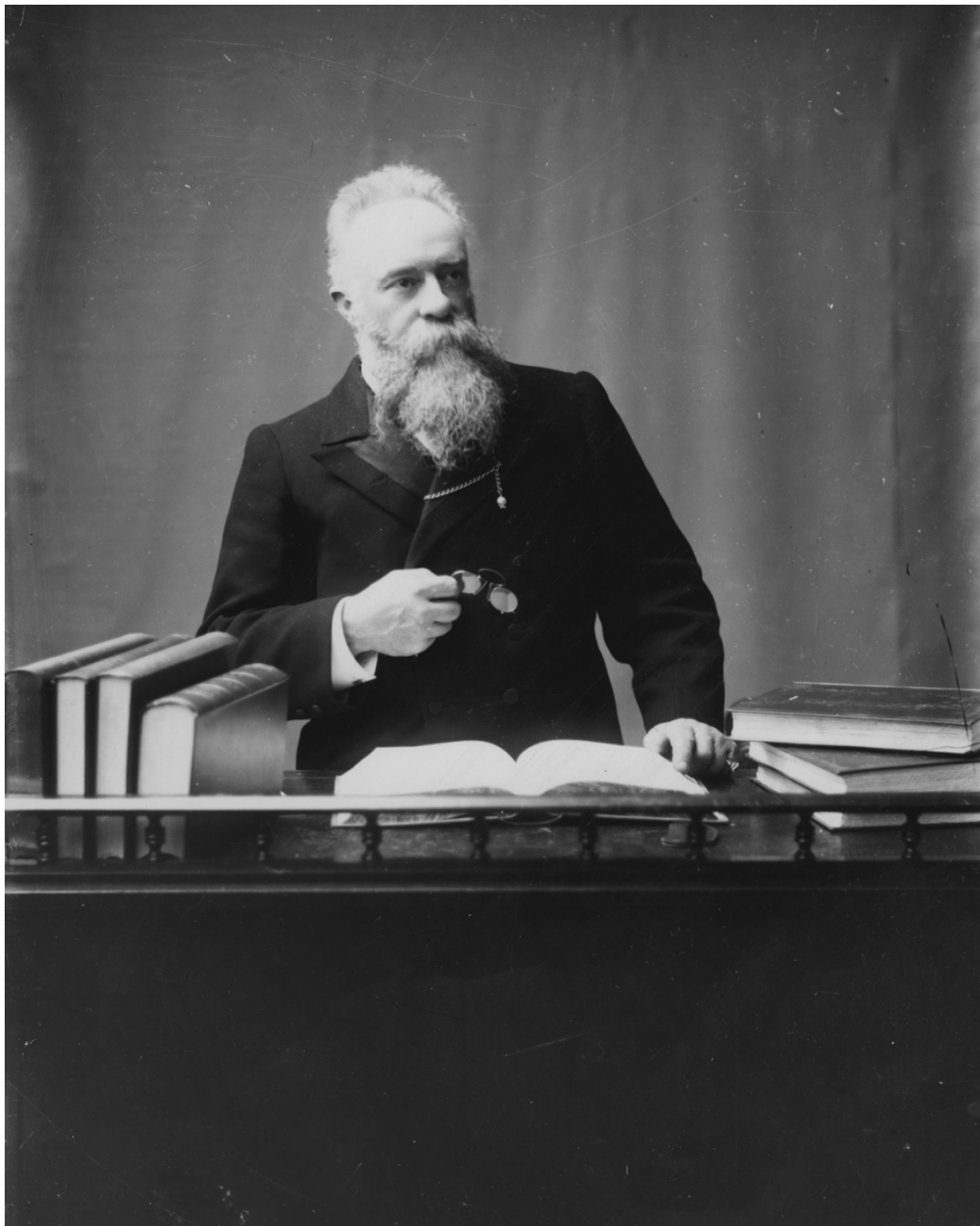
¹¹² Taylor, *Forty-five years public librarian*. For a summary of the Tasmanian mining boom, see Greg Dickens, 'Mining', in *The companion to Tasmanian history* (online), [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion to tasmanian history/M/Mining.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion%20to%20tasmanian%20history/M/Mining.htm), accessed 4 October 2009.

¹¹³ H Reynolds, 'The island colony: Tasmania, society and politics, 1880-1900', MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1963, p. 60.

¹¹⁴ The Minerva Club was influenced by the philosophy of John Stuart Mill and members 'shared a belief in progressive liberalism, in commercial enterprise and the reformatory values of education and self improvement': D Young, *Making crime pay: the evolution of convict tourism in Tasmania*, Hobart, 1996, p. 43.

¹¹⁵ Reynolds, 'The island colony', pp. 73-74.

described as ‘a Liberal, with a strong leaning towards Labor ideals’.¹¹⁶



AJ Taylor, librarian at the Tasmanian Public Library 1873 - 1921.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart 30-7668)

¹¹⁶ Ibid.

Taylor considered that he had ‘put the best of ... [his] life’s work’ into the Tasmanian Public Library, and was unrepentant in the face of frequent and repeated criticism from the trustees.¹¹⁷ His frequent clashes with trustees were often due to his extracurricular interests, and his right to have extracurricular interests and ‘free public utterance’ despite his official position as a servant of the state.¹¹⁸ Trustee James Backhouse Walker found Taylor guilty of ‘gross ignorance and neglect’ in the 1890s;¹¹⁹ likewise Edmund Morris Miller in the 1910s considered that Taylor ‘did not know the preliminaries of library technique’ and found him responsible for the ‘appalling’ state the library had fallen into by the early twentieth century.¹²⁰

If inefficient and negligent in the day-to-day running of the library, Taylor was keen to promote the liberal values of library service in general. He was active at the first meetings of the Library Association of Australasia, giving papers in 1896 on the librarian and his work, and in 1902 on the management of small libraries.¹²¹ In 1896 he told fellow Australasian librarians:

It is of great importance that the public librarian should ever remember that the institution over which he presides has been established not for the benefit of the privileged few, but for the benefit of the people as a whole; and that, subject to certain necessary restrictions, all alike should have free access to the library shelves.¹²²

He went on to quote the monolithic figure of English librarianship, Edward

¹¹⁷ Taylor, *Forty-five years public librarian*.

¹¹⁸ The *World* (Hobart) noted two major conflicts with the trustees over Taylor’s ‘right to free public utterance’; the most significant resulted in the resignation of trustees in 1915, which led to the appointment of E Morris Miller to the board. According to Miller’s biographers J Reynolds and M Giordano, Taylor controlled the Library with ‘an iron hand and usually did more or less as he pleased’: J Reynolds and M Giordano, *Countries of the mind: the biographical journey of Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964)*, Hobart, 1985, pp. 62-64. The *World* (formerly the *Daily Post* which ran from 1908 to 1918) was a rival daily paper in Hobart to the *Mercury*. It ran from 1918 to 1924.

¹¹⁹ JB Walker and PB Walker, *Prelude to Federation (1884-1898): extracts from the journal of James Backhouse Walker*, Hobart, 1978, p. 125.

¹²⁰ E Morris Miller, loose notes, Special and Rare Materials Collection, M.9, UTL, Hobart.

¹²¹ For further discussion of the Library Association of Australasia in this period, see Chapter 2.

¹²² AJ Taylor, ‘The librarian and his work’, in *Account of the proceedings of the Australasian Library Conference: together with the papers read, list of delegates, etc., and the constitution and office bearers of the Library Association of Australasia*, Melbourne, 1896, p. 33.

Edwards ('dear sympathetic Edwards'), from his memoirs, opining that '[w]ithout the liberal spirit that gives ungrudgingly, and the open hand that delights to sow beside many waters, no man, be his other qualifications what they may, can worthily discharge his duties by making the collection entrusted to him attain its full purpose and end'.¹²³ It is instructive to compare Taylor's profile with that of public librarians in Britain in the period. Alistair Black considers that while received notions of the public librarian in Britain in the nineteenth century are of 'irrelevance and ineffectiveness', in fact a number of individuals such as WEA Axon in Manchester and John Potter Briscoe in Nottingham demonstrated a 'significant social commitment'.¹²⁴ They embraced contemporary intellectual movements such as idealism, and formed a subset of the librarian community who stood out from those who acted largely as caretakers. Perhaps Taylor, an autodidact, widely read and with a prodigious memory, saw himself as an antipodean brother of such library activists in the liberal model.

James Backhouse Walker and other trustees initiated a 'cleansing of the Augean stable' in the mid-1890s, involving reforms including 'a new catalogue, the rearrangement of the books in the large room, which was wasted as a news room, and the constant presence of the librarian in the Library room itself'.¹²⁵ According to Walker, Taylor opposed all these schemes, 'except the catalogue, of which he did a part'.¹²⁶ Taylor's paper for the Library Association conference in 1896 reads in this context as an aggrieved commentary on the relationship between librarians and library trustees. He observed that 'the librarian should always be able to rely upon the support and assistance of the board of management', and that 'the feeling that he can do this will strengthen in him the desire to discharge his duties without fear or favour, and will compensate for much want of appreciation of work'.¹²⁷

¹²³ Edward Edwards, quoted by Taylor, 'The librarian and his work', p. 34.

¹²⁴ Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 213.

¹²⁵ Walker, *Prelude to Federation*, p. 123. Walker brought new trustees onto the board to institute the changes, including AI Clark, CM Tenison, FI Young, and FM Young.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Taylor, 'The librarian and his work', p. 35. Taylor's opinions had an impact, at least on Sydney librarian HCL Anderson, who wrote to JB Walker after the conference: 'How is your Librarian getting on? I shall never forget some of his remarks at Melbourne Conference': HCL Anderson to

The first collections

The trustees and managers of the first subscription Tasmanian Public Library made little effort to acquire a local 'archive' of books or newspapers, the primary goal of the book committee being to purchase 'varied and approved Works of Standard Authors', typically British or of British imprint.¹²⁸ The first catalogue of the Tasmanian Public Library, published in 1849, included some 150 works. Only a handful related to the colonies, most purchased within a few years of publication. These included Robert Montgomery Martin's *History of the British colonies* (which included in volume IV 'Possessions in Africa and Austral-asia' that included a chapter on Van Diemen's Land), Paul Strzelecki's *Physical description of New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land*, published only four years previously, and three volumes of a title 'Tasmanian Journal'.¹²⁹ In the following decades a small number of purchases directly related to the island colony were made; most, such as John West's *The history of Tasmania* (Launceston, Tasmania, 1852) and Louisa Anne Meredith's *My home in Tasmania, during a residence of nine years* (London, 1852) were acquired soon after they were published. In 1862, the library contained some 8000 volumes, pamphlets and almanacks, with less than two per cent consisting of volumes related to Tasmania or the other Australian colonies.¹³⁰

The majority of the Australiana and Tasmaniana arrived through donation, the most significant single collection acquisition coming through the subsidised purchase in 1851 of the library of James Ebenezer Bicheno, who had been a trustee of prior to his death and a 'firm supporter of the institution'.¹³¹ Bicheno's

JB Walker, 19 November 1897, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C4/9 (20), UTL, Hobart. Anderson was possibly referring to Taylor's comments that there was a great waste of public money on 'erotic, exotic, and tommyrotic' literature in Australia's public libraries: see 'Library Association of Australasia', *Mercury*, 14 April 1902, p. 3.

¹²⁸ *An alphabetical and classified catalogue, etc. of the Tasmanian Public Library*, 1862.

¹²⁹ *Catalogue of the Tasmanian Public Library*, 1849.

¹³⁰ This calculation was made from examination of the catalogues of the library from 1852, 1855, and 1862, but it is difficult to be absolutely precise, because of abbreviated use of titles in the catalogues.

¹³¹ M Burgess, *Tasmanian Public Library. An alphabetical and classified catalogue, etc.*, 1852. The *Catalogue* for 1852 lists 1,900 books received from Bicheno's will. The *Australian dictionary of biography online edition* indicates that there were 2,500 volumes in the collection acquired by the Library, perhaps reflecting the quantities of multi-volume works: 'Bicheno, James Ebenezer (1785 - 1851)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*,

collection consisted of 1,900 books, many related to Tasmania and the other Australian colonies. The 1852 catalogue for the library lists the collection in class divisions, and within each division the Bicheno volumes are listed as a group, making it easy to compare the types of books from the original library collection, and those added by Bicheno. In section VIII, 'Geography, voyages and travels', for example, Bicheno volumes constitute the entire contents, including a number of significant books such as James Cook's *Voyages* in two volumes from 1777, another edition in three volumes from 1815, and a folio of plates; also Matthew Flinders' *Voyages* in two volumes from 1814, Richard Hakluyt's *Voyages* from 1812, and a number of local geographies relating to New South Wales. The same applies to section XII, 'Natural history, natural philosophy', where Bicheno's thirty-six volumes of John Gould's *Birds of Australia* stands out from the existing library collection, which included no titles related to the colonies or Tasmania.¹³²

When the Tasmanian Public Library reopened it held 5,929 volumes, and a 'considerable quantity of loose rubbish, broken volumes, periodicals apparently of

<http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A010091b.htm?hilit=bicheno>, accessed 12 May 2008. See also J Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library in 1850: its members, its managers and its books', in Morrison and Talbot, *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia*, pp. 11-21. The value of Bicheno's collection was calculated at £857 (compared to the £1416 value for the whole collection in 1852), and the library purchased it for £300.

¹³² Gould's *Birds of Australia* was a common purchase for Australian public libraries in the period, despite its cost. The South Australian Institute, precursor to the Public Library in Adelaide, purchased in the 1860s eight volumes of Gould's *Birds of Australia* for 'several hundred pounds'. It had 'its own special locked case in the Library and could only be read with written permission from the Board of Governors'. The set was one of the few 'rare books' that was purchased by the library: C Bridge, *A trunk full of books: history of the State Library of South Australia and its forerunners*, Netley, S. Aust., 1986, p. 44. The Melbourne Public Library also acquired a copy of Gould's *Birds of Australia*, which was among the 3846 volumes held by the library when it first opened in 1856. As Des Cowley notes, it was at that time 'considered its most valuable possession, having been obtained at a cost of £140': D Cowley, 'The La Trobe Rare Book Collection', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 12, nos. 47 & 48, 1992, p. 94. In 1898 the Library Committee of the Melbourne Public Library sought to 'complete the set of Gould's "Birds" at a cost not exceeding £130': Minutes of Library Committee meeting, 29 September 1898, in Trustees of the Public Library, gallery and Museum, Minutes of the Library and Books Committee (rough copy), vol. 38, MSF 12855, State Library of Victoria. The Library of the Royal Society of Tasmania also held a copy of the *Birds of Australia*, as well as Gould's *Mammals of Australia*, *Monograph of Humming Birds*, and *Birds of Europe* all acquired prior to 1913: Hand-list of the contents of the [Royal Society] Library: Special and Rare Materials Collection, RSA/G/4(1), UTL, Hobart. Tasmanians had a special sense of pride regarding Gould: as AL Butler observed in a centenary commemorative lecture to the Royal Society of Tasmania, Gould came to Tasmania with 'heroic resolve' to advance his researches on Australian birds. His family stayed at Government House under the protection of Lieutenant-Governor John Franklin for 10 months in 1838 while Gould traveled the mainland for bird specimens: AL Butler, 'The life and work of John Gould', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1938, Hobart, 1939, p. 233.

little value' and shelving of 1,200 lineal feet.¹³³ Purchasing patterns established in the old library were continued in the new. Of the 120 volumes purchased during 1873, only two were printed in Australia or related to the colonies: *South Sea bubbles* by the Earl of Pembroke, printed for R Bentley and Son, London, in Melbourne (George Robertson, 1872); and *The Australian mechanic and journal of science* for 1872-3 (published in Melbourne). The remaining purchases consisted of recent publications from Britain, covered the gamut from Charles Darwin's *The expression of the emotions in man and animals* (London, 1872) and *The poet at the breakfast table* by Oliver Wendell Holmes (London, 1872), to a reprint of François Guizot's *Life of Oliver Cromwell*. This lack of interest in local purchases remained consistent through the 1870s - 80s. Local booksellers in this period made no attempt to promote local purchases over international ones. Of the 194 books purchased by the library from local Hobart dealer J Walch & Sons in 1888 and 1889, nine books were related to the locality, including directories and handbooks.¹³⁴

Purchases from another major local Hobart dealer, Propsting & Cockhead, included a similar proportion of Australiana. From May 1887 to July 5 1890, from a total of 172 books (some of multiple volumes) purchased from Propsting & Cockhead, nine were locally specific. The inclusion of some less recently published items, one dating back to 1832 (James Bischoff's *Sketch of the history of Van Diemen's Land, illustrated by a map of the island, and an account of the Van Diemen's Land Company*) suggests that Propsting and Cockhead had a more antiquarian stock. In July 1887 the library purchased James Francis Hogan's *The Irish in Australia*. In September 1889 Bischoff's *Sketch of the history of Van Diemen's Land...* was purchased for 13/6, the first genuine historical Tasmaniana purchased by the library since its re-opening in 1870, and La Pérouse's three volume *Voyage round the world* was purchased for £3/15. In December 1889,

¹³³ 'Public Library Progress Report', 21 February 1870, MCC16/24/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

¹³⁴ These included *The Australian handbook and almanac, and, shippers' and importers' directory* for 1888 and 1889 (Melbourne: Gordon & Gotch), *A century of Australian song* (Melbourne, EW Cole, [1888?]), and Joseph Henry Maiden's *The useful native plants of Australia (including Tasmania)* (London, Sydney, 1889): 'List of books purchased from J Walch & Sons from 1st January 1888 to 31st March 1889', SLT42, TAHO, Hobart.

Robert William Dale's *Impressions of Australia* (London, 1889) was purchased, and in January 1890 William Howitt's *Land, labour and gold, or, two years in Victoria: with visits to Sydney and Van Diemen's Land* (edition uncertain). Purchases for March 1890 included *The Aborigines of Tasmania* (London, 1890) by H Ling Roth. In April 1890 Richard Howitt's *Impressions of Australia Felix, during four year's residence in that colony, notes of a voyage round the world, Australian poems, &c.* (London 1845) and Walter Besant's newly published *Captain Cook* (London 1890) were acquired; and in May, *Coins and tokens of the English colonies* (London, 1890), by Daniel Howorth.

These few purchases represented little of the possible collections of local or Australian material. The Tasmanian Public Library's small collection of Australian works was criticised by British barrister CW Holgate when he made a study of Australian libraries in 1884. Holgate found that '[a]ll Tasmanian publications come to the Library, but they are not many... The collection of Australian works is poor'.¹³⁵ This assessment of the Tasmanian Public Library contrasts with Holgate's opinion of the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library, which consisted of some 8,000 volumes in the period of his review. Holgate found it had a better representation of the literature of Tasmania, having 'certainly the best collection of books in Tasmania' and evidently *about Tasmania*.¹³⁶ This collection was not, of course, generally accessible to the public, although parliamentarians were known to use the collection. The parliamentary librarian, FA Packer, recommended in 1883 that 'in view of their increasing value and scarceness, works relating to the history of Tasmania should be confined to the Library' rather than lent out to Parliamentarians for private use, as had been the case to date.¹³⁷

It is important to consider AJ Taylor's role in the formation of the library's book stock and the failure to acquire an adequate collection of local or Australian material. Taylor played an unusually large role in book purchasing for the library

¹³⁵ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, pp. 29-30.

¹³⁶ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 29.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

up until the mid-1890s. The *World* enthused that Taylor was ‘almost entirely responsible for the choice of books [for the Tasmanian Public Library] since 1873. So that of the books purchased after that year probably 95 per cent on the shelves were bought on his recommendation.’¹³⁸ Walker accused Taylor of neglectfully purchasing many duplicates, especially in later years, and allowing the collection to run down in all areas.¹³⁹ Walker and fellow trustees wrested control of book purchasing from Taylor in the 1894/95 re-organisation of the library, and the book committee chose all books after 1896, at least until the death of Walker in 1899.¹⁴⁰ Despite his passion for education and his promotion of local flora, fauna, and geography, Taylor had little interest in the history of the region or historical documents, at least until the 1890s. This was possibly a product of his convict parentage. As Chapter 5 of this thesis demonstrates, the penal past played an influential role in delaying and moulding the development of historical consciousness in the ex-penal colonies. Taylor’s historical introduction to the 1912 publication *Beautiful Tasmania*, produced by the Tasmanian Tourist Association, avoided any mention of convicts.¹⁴¹ The poverty of the local collections of the library became public from the 1880s, when Walker and a number of fellow amateur historians developed an interest in local history, and a new awareness of the paucity of material with which to compose new ‘scientific’ histories.

Local history and the colonial archive

The 1880s had brought a new period of optimism and activity to the colony of Tasmania. In 1881 revenue for the colony was the largest for any year in its history, the standard of living rose across all classes, and an extensive scheme of public works was initiated. Conservatism in the colony was weakened by new prosperity and ideology, encouraged by the newly emerged liberal press.¹⁴² With the election of the Fysh ministry in 1887, Tasmanian liberal progressives ‘achieved their greatest victory’, with liberals in the lower house of the colonial

¹³⁸ ‘The Jubilee Year. Tasmania’s Public Library’, *World*, 17 December 1920, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Walker, *Prelude to Federation*, p. 125.

¹⁴⁰ Taylor, ‘The librarian and his work’, p. 35.

¹⁴¹ Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 63.

¹⁴² Robson, *A history of Tasmania vol. II*, pp 135-136.

government balancing the upper house, which was still the preserve of the elite landed families.¹⁴³ Robson notes that the Fysh Government, which retained power until 1892, implemented 'far-reaching social and political measures'.¹⁴⁴ The middle class became active in promoting respectability, to be attained by the labouring classes if they converted to middle-class values of temperance, thrift and hard work.¹⁴⁵ The opportunity to influence the lower classes towards middle class values was principally due to the educational reforms, specifically the Public Schools Act 1868 that enforced compulsory attendance for children between seven and twelve years of age.¹⁴⁶ These reforms ensured that by 1891 some 70 per cent of the population were literate.¹⁴⁷ This was also the period in which Tasmania's university was established.¹⁴⁸

Concurrently a significant shift in attitude to local history was occurring. Shame had been the predominant attitude to the past in Tasmania, relating both to convict history and the treatment of the local indigenous population.¹⁴⁹ Although it remained a common theme well into the twentieth century, the new progressive liberalism prompted an emancipation from the burden of history, influencing the ways in which the islanders related to their past.¹⁵⁰ Importantly, as Peter Bolger notes, the young liberals were 'developing a sense of their place within community and it was as far removed as they could make it from the convict-

¹⁴³ Ibid.

¹⁴⁴ Robson, *A history of Tasmania vol. II*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁵ See Shayne Breen, 'Class', in *The companion to Tasmanian history* (online), [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion to tasmanian history/C/Class.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion%20to%20tasmanian%20history/C/Class.htm), accessed 12 January 2009.

¹⁴⁶ It is interesting to consider – though a topic beyond the scope of this thesis – that AJ Taylor, considered that the introduction of the Education Act had deleterious effects on children's health, specifically the system of 'cram' which resulted from the 'pernicious system of payment by results'. This led in some cases to 'brain disease of children at school age': 'Notes from our correspondents', *Western Mail* (Cardiff, Wales), 4 September 1885. Taylor disapproved of the use of the Public Library's resources for such activity, specifically because of the potential ill-health it promoted.

¹⁴⁷ Reynolds, 'The island colony', p. 46.

¹⁴⁸ See RP Davis, *Open to talent: the centenary history of the University of Tasmania, 1890-1990*, Hobart, 1990.

¹⁴⁹ For a discussion on the conflict about the acquisition and preservation of convict literature in the Tasmanian Public Library in the twentieth century, see H Gaunt, 'History and memory in the Tasmanian Public Library: the curious case of "The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land"', *History Australia*, vol. 6, no. 1, 2009, pp. 10.1-10.12. This subject is the focus of Chapter 5 of this thesis.

¹⁵⁰ See Young, *Making crime pay*.

kingdom image'.¹⁵¹ This had also been the case in New South Wales, which like Tasmania bore the heavy burden of convict history. As Tom Griffiths has observed, the formation of the Australian Historical Society in 1901 in Sydney was largely driven by a desire to 'reclaim the past as a source of pride rather than shame'.¹⁵² In Tasmania, James Backhouse Walker wrote in the 1880s of the triumph his generation had achieved in overcoming their convict legacy, finding that '[t]o have broken with our birth's invidious bar, and so grappled with our evil star, is an achievement in which a Tasmanian may well feel pride'.¹⁵³

The distinguished colonial surveyor James Erskine Calder played an important role in promoting the new interest in local history. Calder published extensively in the Tasmanian press from the 1870s, writing nostalgic and popular local history that avoided being 'painted in the hues of sunshine only, with every fact suppressed that might give umbrage to hypercritical writers or others'.¹⁵⁴ Calder was also a dedicated collector of historical records and publications relating to the early decades of Tasmanian history.¹⁵⁵ John Williamson, in his study of Calder, notes that Calder was 'well known, and well regarded, for his historical research' and was proud of his reputation in the 1870s as 'the lone defender of historical manuscripts and newspapers and information on Tasmanian history'.¹⁵⁶

In 1879 Calder presented a document relating to Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's administration to the Tasmanian Public Library, after having described the document enthusiastically in a column in the local press.¹⁵⁷ Two years later, in

¹⁵¹ Bolger, *Hobart Town*, p. 172.

¹⁵² Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 205.

¹⁵³ Quoted in A Alexander, 'The legacy of the convict system', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1998, p. 54. See also M Roe, *The state of Tasmania: identity at Federation-time*, Hobart, 2001, p. 231.

¹⁵⁴ See J Williamson, 'James Erskine Calder: A surveyor of history', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 40, no. 3, 1992, p. 99. JE Calder, 'Something about old Colonists', *Mercury*, 15 January 1881, Supplement p. 1.

¹⁵⁵ Williamson, 'James Erskine Calder', pp. 106-107.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ The document was 'A narrative of some passages in the History of Van Diemen's Land, during the last three years of Sir John Franklin's Administration of its Government', described by the *Mercury* as 'a curious picture of what the public service of Tasmania was forty years ago': 'Presentations to the Public Library', *Mercury*, 22 July 1879, p. 2.

January 1881, he raised concern in the *Mercury* about the poor collection of local history in the library, writing:

It is not often that I am an intruder into the chambers of the Tasmanian Public Library, for though once a dear lover of books, the long, long, spell I afterwards had in the bush — generally in our least frequented districts, into which literature never or rarely penetrated — cured me for ever of bookwormishness. But happening to visit the above-named establishment some months ago, I was courteously shown the collection of autographs preserved there, a very sorry one indeed, and quite unworthy [sic] so useful an institution. The thought therefore occurred to me, from the vast store of old papers which have at different times fallen into my hands, as a general collector of spoils no one else would give houseroom to, I could make up a better one myself for the service of the library...¹⁵⁸

Calder resolved to fix ‘about a hundred letters, mostly those of old colonists, some of which date back to the period of very early settlement’ into a neat volume, to be given to the library.¹⁵⁹

It seems that the volume was never actually handed over, Calder probably leaving it incomplete at his death in early 1882. The public libraries in Sydney and Melbourne acquired much of Calder’s collection, a ‘loss to Tasmania’ that Walker had warned against in a letter to the *Mercury* written twelve days after Calder’s death.¹⁶⁰ In his *Mercury* letter Walker had urged his family to take ‘prompt steps’ to secure his Tasmanian collection (a ‘mass of material which will be of priceless value to the future historian of the *origines* of our little State’) for some Tasmanian public institution, where it might continue to bear his name, and where it might form the nucleus of a special library devoted to subjects exclusively connected with the history and progress of Tasmania’:

The fact that in the capital of the colony no collection exists to which our public writers and other interested in our history and capabilities can refer for much-needed information, is not creditable to the public spirit of our people or Government, and has been [sic] matter for

¹⁵⁸ JE Calder, ‘Something about old Colonists’, *Mercury*, 15 January 1881, Supplement p. 1. Calder wrote a series of ‘biographical sketches of old Tasmanian colonists’ in the *Mercury* under the heading ‘Something about old colonists’ from January to early March 1881.

¹⁵⁹ Calder, ‘Something about old Colonists’, *Mercury*, 15 January 1881.

¹⁶⁰ ‘JB Walker, ‘Early records’, *Mercury*, 8 March 1882, Supplement p. 1.

surprised remark from travellers and visitors from other lands. [...] Indeed, if we do not make an effort speedily to secure the interesting records of our infancy as a colony, which are rapidly becoming lost and dispersed, it will soon be necessary for the Tasmanian writer to travel to the capitals of other colonies to collect the materials of the history of his own country — materials which a negligent people have allowed to slip through their fingers and pass into alien hands.¹⁶¹

JB Walker was to play a very significant role in the evolution of the Tasmanian Public Library, and the growth of awareness of the importance of the local archive. Walker, a lawyer from a prominent Quaker family, was ‘of advanced liberal views, socially committed’¹⁶² and ahead of his time as an active philanthropist and promoter of the library.¹⁶³ Walker was compelled by personal circumstances to remain in Hobart in his adult years even as his similarly gifted sister Mary went to Europe for training in the visual arts. He seems to have accepted his lot with equanimity, working in the Hobart legal fraternity, and sustaining his intellect with an ever-deepening passion for the locale, and the community and its history since white exploration and settlement.¹⁶⁴ Walker’s complaints about the collections of the previous (subscription) Tasmanian Public Library had focused on their poverty in terms of the provision of a (British) liberal education.¹⁶⁵ In the 1880s, however, Walker became concerned about the need to collect and preserve *local* archival and literary material in the institution. This interest coincided with his blossoming passion for local history, and was a direct result of his discovery of the great paucity of archival material and books in centralised sources with which to write his histories of Tasmania. Walker developed considerable expertise in the area of Australiana, publishing an authoritative list of Australiana as an appendix to James Fenton’s *A history of*

¹⁶¹ Ibid.

¹⁶² Neil Smith, ‘Walker, James Backhouse (1841-1899)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060364b.htm?hlite=james%3Bbackhouse%3Bwalker>, accessed 1 September 2008.

¹⁶³ Levett, ‘James Backhouse Walker, the ‘Mope-Hawk’, and the Tasmanian Public Library’, p. 114.

¹⁶⁴ Peter Bolger suggests Walker suffered from depression, and certainly carried the responsibility of looking after his widowed mother: Bolger, *Hobart Town*, p. 166.

¹⁶⁵ Letter from ‘A Poor Student’ (written by JB Walker), in Mope-Hawk, July 1868, quoted in Levett, ‘James Backhouse Walker, the ‘Mope-Hawk’, and the Tasmanian Public Library’, p. 121.

Tasmania from its discovery in 1642 to the present time, in 1884.¹⁶⁶ Unlike Taylor, Walker was not burdened by convict parentage, and played an active role in promoting history in the public library.

Two years after Walker's complaint in the *Mercury* James McClymont, a member of the Royal Society of Tasmania, wrote urgently to local member of the House of Assembly, Bolton Stafford Bird, regarding the 'inadequate supply of books relating to the early history of Tasmania in the Parliamentary to the Colonial Libraries'. He noted that:

Of the records of early explorers prior to the Colonization of this island, I find only one mentioned in the Catalogue of the Parliamentary Library, viz, the Voyages of Captain Cook. The Library possesses no work containing any authentic account of the discovery of Tasman,— neither his own journal published in full in Amsterdam in 1860, nor any of the collections of ancient voyages which contain an abridgement of that journal. It does not contain any of the interesting voyages of the early French navigators... Nor does the Library contain Flinders' own account of his circumnavigation of the island... I would submit that access to such works is indispensable, not only to every Tasmanian desirous of becoming accurately acquainted with the history of his native country. Further, that books of this class are now being eagerly sought after by the public libraries of Europe & America as well as by those of the other Australian Colonies; so that in the course of another generation it will be impossible to procure them at any price whatever.¹⁶⁷

McClymont proposed that 'to prevent the disgrace to our colony of being amongst the least likely places in the world in which to find records of its discovery', immediate steps should be taken to procure such works. This was to be achieved ideally as a collaborative exercise between the committees and boards of trustees of all Tasmanian libraries, including the Parliamentary Library in Hobart, the public libraries of Hobart and Launceston, and the Royal Society of Tasmania, 'or any other learned bodies interested in this matter'.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ J Fenton, *A history of Tasmania from its discovery in 1642 to the present time*, Hobart, Launceston, 1884.

¹⁶⁷ James R McClymont to BS Bird, September 1884, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C9/1, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁶⁸ Ibid.

In the previous year, 1883, Australian historian James Bonwick had published a similar plea in the preface to his history of the Port Phillip Settlement in Victoria.¹⁶⁹ While attempting to research his writings, Bonwick had become aware of the fragmentary and incomplete nature of colonial archival sources in the Colonial Secretary's Office in Hobart, as well as other small collections around the colonies. 'Having written so much about Colonial History, from materials rudely gathered in Australia', Bonwick wrote in his *Octogenarian's Reminiscences*, he saw the opportunity of 'doing greater things through the more extended means afforded by the state Record Office of London'.¹⁷⁰ Delighted with this 'immense repository', particularly the 'vast amount of correspondence between our own ruler, and with people not only of our own race, but with those of various foreign nations',¹⁷¹ Bonwick urged that 'faithful copies of such interesting documents should be in the public libraries of colonial capitals'.¹⁷² Bonwick undertook copying for the various colonial governments from 1883, including South Australia, Victoria, New South Wales and Tasmania. Some of these transcripts went directly to the public libraries, to Melbourne Public Library in 1886 (where chief librarian Edmund la Touche Armstrong was, according to Bonwick, less than enthusiastic, caring more 'for a collection of old newspapers',¹⁷³) and to the Public Library of New South Wales from 1887, where HCL Anderson ('a scholar and a gentleman',¹⁷⁴) made specific suggestions on material to be copied.

In Tasmania, Bonwick's transcriptions remained in Tasmanian Government possession, in the Chief Secretary's department.¹⁷⁵ The Royal Society of Tasmania applied to have custody of the transcriptions at the time the Historical

¹⁶⁹ Tom Griffiths writes of Bonwick that his 'life and work illustrate the impulse to preserve the Word, both written and oral': Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 201. For a substantial description and bibliography of Bonwick, see G Featherstone, 'The life and times of James Bonwick', MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1968.

¹⁷⁰ J Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, London, 1902, p. 238.

¹⁷¹ Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, p. 238.

¹⁷² Bonwick, *Port Phillip settlement*, London, 1883, p. iv.

¹⁷³ Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, pp. 238-9.

¹⁷⁴ Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, p. 9.

¹⁷⁵ For a contemporary description of the record office in the period, see 'Our Record Office. Nothing like it in the other states', *Mercury*, 3 February 1905, p. 3.

Section was set up but were refused permission. The government considered that some items were 'of a private nature and ought not to be made public', an indication of ongoing sensitivity to the convict past and retained control of all the material.¹⁷⁶ Walker's endeavours to promote Tasmanian history were encouraged by the liberal government. Premier Fysh had, in Walker's opinion, 'liberal ideas as to the importance of the work'.¹⁷⁷ Fysh received Bonwick's transcriptions directly, and passed them on to Walker for 'perusal and remarks'.¹⁷⁸ Correspondence with Bonwick was undertaken by Walker in a private capacity, rather than by the public librarian as in the other states.

Walker found Bonwick's transcripts revelatory, although he was privately critical of Bonwick's choice of material.¹⁷⁹ Walker gave Bonwick specific instructions on types of documents to source, and particular logs and charts to try to track down, also instructing Bonwick to photographically copy Tasmanian charts, plans, and views. Walker identified 143 pages of transcripts received which he did not consider to be of any value, either because they were duplicates of earlier transcripts, they duplicated material that was already available in print form (Walker even pointed out where he had copies of this material in his private library), or did not relate to Australia. Walker found in 1891 that 'of all the 900 pages, the few despatches of Collins and Bligh from 1806 to 1808 are almost the only papers which advance the history beyond your first consignments',¹⁸⁰ but assured Bonwick that he had 'not spoken of these things to anyone but

¹⁷⁶ See Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, pp. 229, 232.

¹⁷⁷ JB Walker to Mary Walker, 14 August 1892, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/L2/7 (19), UTL, Hobart.

¹⁷⁸ JB Walker to J Bonwick, 19 February 1888, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, 284, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁷⁹ Walker wrote to his sister Mary: 'For a man who has had such opportunities in the way of searching for old documents he shows wonderfully little discretion in his selections. I only wish I had the time & the run of the Record Office & the Brit. Mus. Library!': JB Walker to Mary Walker, 16 July 1890, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/L2/5 (19), UTL, Hobart. Walker was increasingly critical of Bonwick's work as his project progressed, Walker urging Bonwick to adopt a more rigorous system of documenting the link with original sources. Walker suggested that it would be 'well in future to note on each copy where the original is to be found, with its official number and so forth to facilitate reference at any future time': JB Walker to J Bonwick, 19 February 1888, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 287, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁸⁰ JB Walker to James Bonwick, 14 February 1891, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 449, UTL, Hobart.

yourself'.¹⁸¹ Walker was concerned that the work must be scientific and orderly, in order to continue to attract government funding.¹⁸²

Walker realised that the promotion of the transcriptions, in the form of talks to the Royal Society, was central to retaining financial support for the project.¹⁸³ In November 1888 Walker presented to members of the Royal Society the first of a number of lectures dealing with Tasmanian history based on the new data.¹⁸⁴ Local history was as yet unorthodox in this forum: Walker observed that 'the subject of the present Paper may appear to be scarcely within the scope of the objects of the Royal Society'.¹⁸⁵ Walker was careful to inform his audience that of the early period of Tasmanian settlement 'no contemporary records have been preserved in our local archives; our knowledge of those early times has hitherto been derived merely from vague and inaccurate tradition', and that his history marked a new period of accuracy, guaranteed through access to the archive.¹⁸⁶ Walker's papers were very successful and popular. Michael Roe considers that Walker achieved his goals, producing history that was 'meticulous in documentation and discerning in judgment'.¹⁸⁷ Despite Walker's best efforts, however, government financial support for Bonwick's project ceased in 1894, after the end of Fysh's ministry.

¹⁸¹ JB Walker to J Bonwick, 24 July 1890, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 427, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁸² Walker wrote to Bonwick that '[i]f these broad lines are adhered to and only the more important documents are copied, the government will probably continue the vote indefinitely; but if they find that the history does not advance, they will certainly stop the supplies': JB Walker to James Bonwick, 14 February 1891, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 450, UTL, Hobart. Walker warned Bonwick not to send so much material, so often, noting that 'The Government is getting alarmed at the mass poured in upon them, and are beginning to question whether there can be so much material valuable enough to justify the outlay. If you want them to continue the work, it will be advisable to restrict your selection very considerably, and to send less bulk, and at larger interval': JB Walker to James Bonwick, 16 April 1891, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 463, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁸³ Walker wrote to Bonwick 'I am trying to get some more papers done before Parliament meets, with the view of keeping up the interest of the Members and of the public in your work': JB Walker to James Bonwick, 10 May 1891, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, p. 469, UTL, Hobart.

¹⁸⁴ JB Walker, *Early Tasmania: papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Hobart, 1902, p. 1. Walker's papers on Tasmanian history were published together after Walker's death in this volume.

¹⁸⁵ Walker, *Early Tasmania*, p. 1.

¹⁸⁶ Walker, *Early Tasmania*, p. 144.

¹⁸⁷ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 231.

In a period in which, as Greg Denning has written, ‘inventiveness and imagination in discovering new primary sources became a mark of an historians’ genius and good luck’,¹⁸⁸ it is not hard to understand Walker’s mix of excitement at the riches of new sources Bonwick’s transcriptions provided, and his frustration with Bonwick’s somewhat haphazard selection of records. Walker was keen to draw a clear line between the practices of older history, ‘vague and inaccurate’, and the new ‘accurate’ history. As fellow Tasmanian (and chairman of trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library) Sir James Willson Agnew observed in regard the ‘new’ history, in his presidential address to the ‘Literature and Fine Arts’ section of the Australasian Association for the Advancement of Science in 1890:

Truth, myth, and fable have been relegated to their proper spheres. Evidence is more carefully weighed and sifted, and stricter accuracy, the result of original research in national archives and other collections freely open to the inquiring student, has been more generally secured.¹⁸⁹

Although the research that Walker and his fellow amateur Tasmanian historians undertook was possibly superficial, concentrating as Stefan Petrow has shown on ‘the facts and small, self-contained topics, which were accessible to their small number of conservative colleagues’,¹⁹⁰ their activities were crucial in further stimulating the awareness for the need to preserve the local archive. In 1897 long-time champion of the Tasmanian Public Library, Justin McCarty Browne, resolved to engineer the acquisition of his private collection in a publicly-accessible institution.¹⁹¹ Characterised in his obituary as a ‘most diligent collector

¹⁸⁸ G Denning, *Performances*, Carlton, Vic., 1996, p. 55.

¹⁸⁹ ‘The Australasian Science Association’, *Argus*, 13 January 1890, p. 4.

¹⁹⁰ S Petrow, ‘The Antiquarian Mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927’, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, vol. 137, 2003, 73. Michael Roe also demonstrates that Walker wrote very little about convicts in his histories, showing ‘much more sympathy to aboriginals’: Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 231.

¹⁹¹ In his Will, Browne wanted the collection offered in order of preference to the Royal Society of Tasmania, the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library, ‘any Public Library at Launceston not being a loan library but one of reference’, and fourth on the list, the Tasmanian Public Library. After the Tasmanian Public Library, Browne wanted preference to go to the Melbourne Public Library, the Adelaide Royal Society, and finally the ‘Sydney free library founded by the late Mr Justice Wise’. The collection was to be kept by the institution purchasing it ‘for reference not for loan under any pretence’: Will of Justin McCarty Browne, NS268/6, TAHO, Hobart. I have found no data

of papers and books connected to the history of Tasmania',¹⁹² Browne had formed a significant locally focused collection. This was described at the time as 'principally a literary collection relating to Tasmania, but also consists of Coins, Tokens, representations of "Currency", etc'. It also included historical 'documents' that were 'supposed to be "unique"'.¹⁹³ The Tasmanian Public Library 'secured' the collection at their meeting of trustees on 6 March 1890. The annual report for 1889-90 observed that '[o]pportunities of securing such collections are now very rare, and it would have been a great loss if the valuable collection referred to had been lost to the Colony'.¹⁹⁴

The purchase of Browne's collection was significant for the Tasmanian Public Library. Newly interested in the local archive in 1890, Taylor wrote a lengthy comment piece in the *Mercury* in which he described the evolving archival function of the institution:

Those who undertake to record events relating to the early and recent history of the colony naturally resort to the Public Library for information. For some time past efforts have been made to secure for the institution under notice all the works — whether in the shape of books, newspapers, official documents, or pamphlets — having any bearing upon Tasmania and the other Australasian colonies. By a recent purchase of the collection made by the late Justin McCarthy [sic] Browne the collection now being made for the Tasmanian Public Library has been considerably added to...¹⁹⁵

Taylor was concerned at the library's ability to preserve this material, however, noting that '[a]t the present time there is no convenience for making these valuable possessions of the institution available to the public'.¹⁹⁶ He continued that:

indicating why any of the libraries higher on Browne's preference list did not acquire the collection.

¹⁹² 'Obituary. Justin McCarty Browne', *Mercury*, 22 July 1889, p. 3.

¹⁹³ Will of Justin McCarty Browne, NS268/6, TAHO, Hobart. The Ballinvoher Collection, valued at £150 in the inventory of his assets: Affidavit of assets and inventory of JM Browne, 9 September 1889, NS268/1/6, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁹⁴ Tasmanian Public Library Annual Report for 1889-1890, p. 4.

¹⁹⁵ 'The Tasmanian Public Library. [By the Librarian.] No. 2', *Mercury*, 27 June 1890, p. 3.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

...it has become a matter of importance that a room should be provided in which these important records may be placed under lock and key for safe-keeping. Many of them, if lost, could not be replaced at any price, and it is a matter of difficulty now to secure works relating to the colonies which were plentiful enough only a few years ago.¹⁹⁷

The new historical section of the Royal Society of Tasmania

The need to preserve documentary material for the purposes of writing accurate history was one of the key aims of the 'Historical and Geographical Section' of the Royal Society, launched in 1899 by Walker and a handful of other amateur historians, including the Tasmanian Anglican Bishop Henry Hutchinson Montgomery. The new historical section was formed 'so as to obtain all that could possibly be gathered concerning the past history of the colony before it became too late',¹⁹⁸ with an explicit interest in documentary heritage. Walker and Montgomery also promoted oral history, and were active in gathering the reminiscences of 'old timers'. The creation of the section within the Royal Society was an indication of the intent to place history-making in the sphere of the scientific, rather than the folk legend or the anecdote. In the foundation of this new history, the safe-keeping of documents was seen to be crucial.¹⁹⁹ The historical section placed a particular value on local history. One of the principal objects of the new section was to 'gather materials for the history of Tasmania', Walker noting that 'it was a pity that some efforts in that direction had not been made earlier', 'valuable public records' having already been 'lost to the colony'.²⁰⁰ Both Montgomery and Walker drew attention to gaps in the local history collections of these institutions. Montgomery urged fellow members of the Royal Society:

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, for the years 1898-1899*, Hobart, 1900, p. xxvii.

¹⁹⁹ Bain Attwood has observed that the link between the traditional geographical mission of Royal Societies in Australia could be extended to include historical investigation, as the patriotic motive to see the resources of the country exploited was shared by geographer and historian, who could equally celebrate the feats of the pioneer settlers: B Attwood and H Doyle, *Possession: Batman's treaty and the matter of history*, Carlton, Vic., 2009, p. 166.

²⁰⁰ *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania ... 1898-1899*, p. xxv.

...to find out the gaps in our [Royal Society] library in this direction — make out lists of the books we need and beg for them — and ask the Government to help us with funds to purchase books and Tasmanian publications as they are swept up and carried away from Tasmania to the larger colonies.²⁰¹

Walker stressed in his speech to fellow members of the Royal Society that the Tasmanian Public Library was in a state even worse than the Royal Society Library, being ‘disgracefully deficient in works relating to Tasmania’.²⁰² ‘Not one-tenth of the books written on Tasmania were to be found there’, he observed.²⁰³ Walker was most concerned about the absence of the local archive for future generations, suggesting that ‘[o]ur young people and all educated people ought to know something about the history of the colony’.²⁰⁴

Walker took it upon himself to promote the archival responsibility of the public libraries widely. In 1897 he visited the Melbourne Public Library, providing Armstrong with ‘information re the pseudonymous Tasmanian works’ in the Tasmanian library’s collection, and receiving offers of information exchange on colonial works in the Melbourne Public Library.²⁰⁵ He also researched sources of Tasmanian history in Sydney. HCL Anderson had an active interest in supplementing the Public Library of New South Wales’ collection of Tasmanian colonial material, particularly completing sets of early Tasmanian newspapers.²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Dr Montgomery, address to Royal Society of Tasmania, in Minutes, Royal Society of Tasmania, meeting May 19, 1899, Special and Rare Materials Collection, RSA/H/1, p. 5, UTL, Hobart.

²⁰² *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania ... 1898-1899*, p. xxv. It can be assumed that Walker spoke with confidence and accuracy about the collections of the library, through his involvement with the reorganization of the collections in 1895/96.

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ W Nagler to JB Walker, 14 August 1897, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C4/9 (19), UTL, Hobart. Walker was particularly keen to view the papers of JE Calder in the Melbourne Public Library. Walker had viewed these papers when they had been in the possession of Calder’s daughters, reporting to Bonwick at the time that they were ‘a perfect mine of information, and nearly all our prominent men are represented’: JB Walker to James Bonwick, 3 June 1892, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/4, p. 17, UTL, Hobart. (MS 10913).

²⁰⁶ HCL Anderson to JB Walker, 19 November 1897, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C4/9 (20), UTL, Hobart.

Conclusion

Despite Walker's call to archive, the library did not substantially increase its local collections or change its desultory attitude to purchasing these materials until the 1920s. In 1897 John Kerr, resident of Napier, New Zealand, but a former resident of Hobart in the first half of the nineteenth century, offered Ross' *Hobart Town Almanacs* for the years 1829, and 1831-1835, and other early material. Kerr stated himself 'willing to present them to the Library, if it does not already hold them', on the condition that 'they shall not be alienated from the Library, except to revert to me or my heirs'.²⁰⁷ The Tasmanian Public Library was tardy in its response, and Kerr wrote testily two and a half months later 'I cannot but think that my offer was at least worthy of the courtesy of an answer — the more specially as I believe that the books offered could not now be purchased at any price'.²⁰⁸ Walker's early death in November 1899, particularly, deprived the institution of a significant champion for local history and local collections.

As the next chapter will show, even as the local paradigm gained significance in the public library, the colonies of Australia were enlivened by debate about the formation of the nation. Burgeoning nationalism from the 1890s was to play an increasing role in the formation of collections. From this period an increasing self-definition was apparent in the major principal libraries, as well as public museums and art galleries, as functioning as 'national' institutions. Custodians of these libraries increasingly harnessed the rhetoric of nationalism to seek greater governmental support and funding, promoting the state libraries' wider purpose in the construction of Australian nationhood.²⁰⁹ But in less rhetorical and more practical ways, the public library in this period retained a local emphasis as equally stimulating for its nascent and minor role as archive and community resource.

²⁰⁷ John H Kerr to 'The Curator', Tasmanian Public Library, 14 December 1897, NS 256/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

²⁰⁸ John H Kerr to Perkins, 28 February 1898, NS 256/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

²⁰⁹ For an examination of the role of nationalism in the Australian public library after Federation in 1901, see H Gaunt, "'A native instinct of patriotism': Nationalism in the Australian public library, from Federation to the 1930s. A case study of the Public Library of Tasmania", *Library History*, vol. 24, no. 2, 2008, pp. 152-66.

As I noted at the beginning of this chapter, Patrick Joyce suggested that in mid-nineteenth-century Britain the notion of collecting for the public archive was 'closely related to the idea that the library should be a representation of some sense of community'.²¹⁰ While the gradually increasing interest shown by librarians and library advocates in the 1880s and 1890s in the colonies of Australia in the collecting of local materials offers a clear sign of the increasing recognition of this public library function, at a deeper level it also provides evidence of a strengthening sense of place and social identity in Australian communities in the last decades of the century.

²¹⁰ Joyce, 'The politics of the liberal archive', p. 40.

CHAPTER 2:

Professionalism and patriotism: Federation nationalism and the public library

Introduction

Chapter 1 addressed the delay of the Australian public library in performing an active role as a 'liberal archive' in the colonies, arguing that a lack of 'nationalising' history and an under-developed public historical sphere were critical in this divergence from the British prototype. Chapter 2 addresses the changes in the public library sphere directly related to the emergence of civic and cultural nationalism in the Federation period, 1890-1915. In the special issue of *Library Trends* focusing on libraries in times of war, revolution or social change, Boyd Rayward and Christine Jenkins suggested that 'the library and librarians have always consistently played a role — though perhaps rarely a central one — as either victim or agent in the events that characterize periods of social upheaval'.¹ Supporting this contention, this chapter argues the social and cultural change associated with Federation and civic nationalism directly stimulated the Australian library profession to act with agency to support and promote the newly constructed nation state.² This chapter argues that the Federation period prompted newly nationalistic identificatory impulses in library professionals, and stimulated a new perception of the distinctiveness related to geographical and historical 'difference' from the metropolis.

The chapter places the examination of the effects of nationalism in the public library in the context of ongoing parallel patriotisms (regional, continental and metropolitan) that continued to influence the evolution of the public library.

¹ WB Rayward and C Jenkins, 'Libraries in times of war, revolution, and social change', *Library Trends*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2007, p. 363.

² Michael Piggott has also made this point, in the context of studying the evolution of the National Archives in Australia. He reflects that 'societies show a heightened concern for material links with the past during times of upheaval and rapid change... Revolution, confederation and decolonisation and their archival links would qualify, and, with Australia's beginning in mind, so would war'. He also identifies an 'archival response to the past which often virtually accompanies a national beginning': M Piggott, 'Beginnings', in SM McKemmish and M Piggott (eds.), *The records continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years*, Clayton, Vic., 1994, p. 13.

Australian historiography typically finds that national sentiment in this period existed concurrently with regionalism, endemic local loyalties, and ongoing devotion to Britain and Empire.³ This state of being has been described as a 'schizophrenic nationalism', characterised by 'little perceived contradiction between imperial and Australian loyalties',⁴ and as 'nation-in-empire'.⁵ John Hirst asserts that the citizens of the Australian colonies 'thought of themselves as British and were strongly attached to their particular colonies, but they also bore the name of the continent', and all native-born thought of themselves as 'Australians'.⁶ Similarly, Helen Irving suggests that 'the nation' was 'imagined' as a community that encompassed not only the geographical entity of Australia, but also England, Britain, and even the whole British Empire.⁷ These manifold concurrent identifications — which federalist politician Alfred Deakin described in the phrase 'independent Australian Britons'⁸ — can be identified in many

³ See for example B Schwarz, "'Shivering in the noonday sun": the British world and the dynamics of "Nativisation"', in K Darian-Smith, P Grimshaw and S Macintyre (eds.), *Britishness abroad: transnational movements and imperial cultures*, Carlton, Vic., 2007, pp. 19-44. This is sometimes characterised in the historiography as a happy duality, at other times as more ambiguous and complex. For a discussion of this, see Stuart Ward, who suggests that the very concept of 'nationalism' is problematic 'when applied to the outlook, sentiments and self-interest' of settler-colonial nations such as Australia, primarily because there was never enough *ethnic* distinction (including categories of inclusion and exclusion) between the British/Australian settlers and Britain itself to assert an 'exclusive, or "monolithic" claim over the allegiance and loyalties of their adherents'. Australian's experience of nationalism, in this argument, was predominantly 'British and imperial', 'tailored to the outlook, aspirations and anxieties of a settler-colonial population': S Ward, 'The "New Nationalism" in Australia, Canada and New Zealand: civic culture in the wake of the British world', in Darian-Smith, Grimshaw and Macintyre, *Britishness abroad*, pp. 235, 259. For an illuminating discussion of the Tasmanian situation specifically, see H Reynolds, 'Identity', in A Alexander (ed.), *The companion to Tasmanian history*, Hobart, 2005, p. 457.

⁴ M Lyons, 'Introduction', in M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, pp. xviii-xix. In analysing book history in Australia, Lyons finds that the period 1891-1945 is clearly marked by these twin themes of the 'influence of imperial connections and attempts to shape a national culture' (p. xix).

⁵ K Darian-Smith, P Grimshaw and S Macintyre, 'Introduction', in Darian-Smith, Grimshaw and Macintyre, *Britishness abroad*, p. 10.

⁶ J Hirst, *The sentimental nation: the making of the Australian Commonwealth*, Melbourne, 2000, p. 202.

⁷ H Irving, *To constitute a nation: a cultural history of Australia's constitution*, Cambridge, UK; New York, 1997, p. 26.

⁸ See A Deakin and S Macintyre, *'And be one people': Alfred Deakin's Federal story*, Carlton South, Vic., 1995. Macintyre describes Deakin as 'an imperial loyalist, truer to the ideals of Empire than its English administrators, as well as a native-born colonial nationalist'. He notes that this combination 'lies outside our postcolonial imagination but was no less real to Deakin'. Deakin was passionately committed to Federation, and the 'making of nationhood in the Commonwealth of Australia became for him a sacred duty' (pp. xii, xiii). Deakin was Prime Minister for periods between 1903 and 1910.

spheres of cultural and political life in Australia in the period, and were particularly acute around the time of Federation.⁹ This chapter finds that multiple identificatory tropes continued to influence the course of development of the public library, even as nationalism became more prominent.¹⁰

The exploration of the role of nationalism and co-existent identifications in the Australian public library undertaken in this chapter is methodologically motivated by GK Peatling's investigation into national identity in the British public library, published in *Library History* in 2004. Peatling argues that public libraries in Britain in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries contributed to the selection and construction of national identities, and that nationalism in the public library was both 'performative' (having a naturalising effect on evocations of nation) and politically motivated.¹¹ He observes that:

It is particularly important to note that an image of the, or a, nation can only be portrayed in any walk of life if interpretations are made about its inhabitants, territory, attributes, history and character: such constructions of the or a nation thus occupy space which might have been filled by alternative formations. Images of nations constituted in ostensibly non-political walks of life thus influence identity, comprise image of "community" and of "us" and "them", and thus affect individual and collective thought and action in a way which must be regarded as political.¹²

⁹ For a discussion of the debate concerning the degree of nationalism associated with Federation, see H Irving, 'A nation in a day', in KT Livingston, R Jordan and G Sweely (eds.), *Becoming Australians: the movement towards Federation in Ballarat and the nation*, Kent Town, S. Aust., 2001, esp. pp. 3-4.

¹⁰ The complexity of identifications, which I argue were deeply embedded in the public library in Australia, can also be found in the British public library in the same period. As Peatling has observed, expressions of local pride in the British public library were never inimical to the presence of national identities. Peatling notes that 'national politics were often interpreted through local concerns, so that the two became almost indistinguishable': GK Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain, 1850-1919', *Library History*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, p. 37.

¹¹ Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', pp. 43, 37. Peatling analyses rival hypotheses about nationalism in the public library, including 'perennialist /primordialist' (national identities are pre-political and timeless, more a nineteenth century viewpoint); 'ethno-symbolist' (nations are long-term but adaptive, and influenced ethnicity); and 'modernist' (national identity is recent, constructed and manipulated by elites). Ultimately, he considers the ethno-symbolist interpretation of the role played by British libraries in the constitution of national identity in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries to be most convincing, 'because the possibility often existed of choosing to reinforce one or several of particular candidate national identities, and thus of repressing alternative versions of national identity or other identities': Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 43.

¹² Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 36.

Nationalism, Peatling suggests, can be found in the *constitutive* and *creative* nature of choices made by those associated with public library provision, from the national to the local sphere. He finds evidence of multiple ‘discourses of the nation’ received and articulated by library managers and library users in the British public library.¹³ Peatling argues that, while the discourses of nationalism in the public library may appear unremarkable, this is in fact ‘evidence of their power to naturalize essentially political constructs’.¹⁴ Peatling urges closer investigation of the effects and manifestations of inscriptions of nation in the library in order to reveal and analyse fundamental political motivations in library philosophy and practice. Key areas for analysis include library law and the propagation of libraries by the state or local elite, the discursive construction of nations articulated by library administrators and commentators, censorship and stock control, implications of classification schemes, targeted indoctrination of particular sets of readers, architecture, display and commemoration.¹⁵

In examining nationalism in the Australian public library in this chapter, I have concentrated on the professed attitudes of librarians, the attitudes of contemporary library commentators to library practice in areas such as classification schemes, and the evidence of use of the library space for purposes that would promote a nationalist agenda or rhetoric. The evolution of an archive of — and for — the nation as the twentieth century progressed, and exhibitionary tactics and commemoration, will be addressed in later chapters.

This chapter first outlines aspects of the new civic nationalism in the Australian colonies that emerged in the late nineteenth century, including the confluence of political and cultural nationalism. The growing professionalism of Australian librarians, including the formation of the Library Association of Australasia in 1896, is examined. The chapter analyses the new attention paid to stock control, nationalistic classification schemes, the promotion of ‘national’ collections within the state libraries, and impetus to create a central national library in the context of

¹³ Peatling, ‘Public libraries and national identity in Britain’, p. 44.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Peatling, ‘Public libraries and national identity in Britain’, p. 38.

nationalism and patriotism. The second half of the chapter assesses the relative importance of national, regional and metropolitan identifications on the evolution of the Tasmanian Public Library in the Federation period, focusing on the pivotal role played by nationalist trustee Edmund Morris Miller in promoting a national agenda.

Federation and civic nationalism in Australia

Late-nineteenth-century Australian nationalism emerged as an expression of the self-awareness and pride in achievement of several generations of white settlement in the colonies. It was also a subset of broader international trends that saw intellectuals and artists in Europe and North America were ‘ransacking history, nature and folklore’ to construct national cultures and identities.¹⁶ The intensified ‘imagining’ of nation was facilitated by a number of factors including widespread literacy,¹⁷ the faster dissemination of ideas through ever-increasing quantities of printed material available across the colonies, better forms of long-distance communication, and more efficient transport.¹⁸ Radical cultural nationalism emerged at this time, in the nationalist school of literature focused on the Sydney weekly paper, the *Bulletin*, and the activities of the group of painters that came to be known as the Australian impressionists, or the Heidelberg School. In Melbourne, nationalism was nurtured from the 1870s and ‘80s by a group of intellectuals who often met at the Yorick Club and shared an interest in colonial literature and history.¹⁹ Richard White identifies the principal factor in this flush of creative energy from a new generation of Australian artists as being birthplace.

¹⁶ S Alomes, *A nation at last?: the changing character of Australian nationalism 1880-1988*, North Ryde, NSW, 1988, pp. 13-14; R White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, 1981, p. 85.

¹⁷ Literacy in Australia was high by world standards following the creation of state education systems in the 1870s, and Australians had a reputation for consuming large amounts of print. John Arnold observes that ‘Australia had, by international standards, an exceptionally high rate of newspaper consumption. Newspapers were the source of local, metropolitan, interstate and world news’: J Arnold, ‘Newspapers and daily reading’, in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 255.

¹⁸ Irving, *To constitute a nation*, p. 31.

¹⁹ See J Johnson, *Laughter and the love of friends: a centenary history of the Melbourne Savage Club 1894-1994 and a history of the Yorick Club 1868-1966*, Melbourne, 1994. The Yorick Club included historians such as JJ Shillinglaw, who was an expert on explorer Matthew Flinders, and GW Rusden, collector of Australiana and author of the *History of Australia* (1883), as well as the author Marcus Clarke.

These writers and artists were more likely to be Australian-born, more at home in the Australian environment, and more likely to champion its virtues and unique qualities.²⁰

This period of cultural identity-seeking had particular political and economic significance for Australia, as it marked the final progress towards the Federation of the five separate British colonies on the continent of Australia and the island colony of Tasmania. The Australian nation was formalised in 1901.²¹ Unlike many nations formed in the period, the creation of the Commonwealth of Australia at Federation was entirely peaceful, inaugurated by an Act of Parliament ratified by the British crown. Federal nationalism had its own peculiar flavour, created not by bloodshed or rebellion, but by a conscious effort on the part of civic leaders and the populace to imagine a national community, and take the political, social and cultural steps to bring it into being. John Hirst has described Australia at Federation as ‘a sentimental nation’,²² a nation-state created on the foundation of a people sharing common sentiments, ideals and aspirations.²³ Similarly, Helen Irving has described Federation as the moment in which ‘the nation imagined and the nation accomplished came together’.²⁴

Federation brought about a confluence of sentiments under both political and cultural banners. Graeme Davison has demonstrated that Federation produced ‘almost as many metaphors as flags, poems and banquets’, most evoking images

²⁰ White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 87.

²¹ Robert Birrell clearly links federalist and nationalist politics in the period. He notes that the intention was to ‘create a nation-state on the foundation of a people sharing common ideals and aspirations’; in this context the federal movement can be classified as a nationalist movement: R Birrell, *Federation: the secret story*, Potts Point, NSW, 2001, p. 3. Similarly, John Hirst argues that national sentiment was the precondition of the union of the Australian colonies, as there were no other pressing factors, such as dangers within or without the colonies, to force the union as in some other federations: Hirst, *The sentimental nation*, p. 271. Birrell’s and Hirst’s positions, and those of other writers such as Helen Irving, are set against those scholars such as Richard White (in *Inventing Australia*), who have argued that Federation was a product of political maneuvering and economic expediency, and lacked community-driven ‘national’ sentiment. My findings regarding the public library in the period support those of Birrell, Hirst, and Irving: librarians worked in an idealistic framework in their promotion of national values in their organisations.

²² See Hirst, *The sentimental nation*.

²³ Birrell, *Federation*, p. 3.

²⁴ See, for example, Irving, *To constitute a nation*, p. 45.

of the nation achieving its manifest destiny.²⁵ Culturally, there was a strong emphasis on 'nativeness', as a broad category referring to people, attitudes, and fauna and flora that was expressed in the popularity of naturalist clubs and the creation of environmental protection legislation.²⁶ Interest in endemic flora and fauna fed into the collecting interests of the major colonial museums that, as we have seen in Chapter 1, focused on this aspect of cultural identification rather than proto-national history.²⁷ There was a strong intermingling of political and cultural circles, a process that Irving describes as 'simultaneous, indeed symbiotic, cultural and political nationalism'.²⁸ Many of the federalist politicians, the 'Fathers of Federation' such as Alfred Deakin, Andrew Inglis Clark and John Quick, mixed in literary circles in which nationalistic and idealistic poetry and literature were read or produced. Along with members of the Australian Natives Association, a highly nationalistic (though not anti-British) society formed to promote the welfare and status of Australian-born citizens, these men combined patriotism with the practicalities of creating an economic and constitutional foundation for the new nation. Citizens enjoyed a peak of optimism about the future of Australia as a nation. As Irving has noted, this optimism combined

²⁵ G Davison, 'Navigating Australia's past: milestones, crossroads, slow curves and blind turns', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2001, p. 8.

²⁶ H Irving, 'The most eccentric of them all: J W R Clarke', in D Headon and J Williams (eds.), *Makers of miracles: the cast of the federation story*, Melbourne, 2000, p. 195. Irving describes the activities of Joseph Henry Maiden, Government Botanist, Director of the Botanical Gardens in Sydney, who was active in educating the people of New South Wales about their native flora, finding that Maiden was a 'significant agent of Australian sentiment, through stimulating consciousness of the value of "nativeness"' (p. 194).

²⁷ L Robin, *How a continent created a nation*, Sydney, 2007, p. 76. This was particularly the case at the Tasmanian Museum in Hobart. Alexander Morton, who had come from the Australian Museum in Sydney to Tasmania in 1884 to act as the Curator (later becoming Director), presided over great changes in the Tasmanian Museum. Morton had a marked interest in promoting Australian and Tasmanian content. As Matthew Baker notes, Morton 'demonstrated a particular commitment to popular education, and a desire to present not only Tasmania but also Australia to tourists at a time when a sense of nation was uncommon in Australian museums'. Morton's commitment was demonstrated by the creation and development of the 'Australian Room' in the Museum from 1889. In 1902 he opened a new wing for the Museum in Macquarie Street, including a 'new Tasmanian room featuring collections of natural science and ethnology': M Baker and P Hughes, *Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*, Hobart, Tas., 2007, pp. 3-4. Joanne Huxley argues that Morton was explicitly engaging in nation-building in his promotion of Tasmania and Australia to residents and tourists, with both natural history and some social history materials. See JK Huxley, 'Courtier to the powerful and zealous curator for the people: the contribution of Alexander Morton to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1884-1907', *Kanunnah*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 1-34.

²⁸ Irving, *To constitute a nation*, p. 34.

‘visionary energies of the Enlightenment, socialism, liberalism and technological advances’.²⁹

Australia was recognised as being a world leader in political and social reform, particularly in its progressive civic values. For contemporary intellectuals, poets and politicians, Federation ‘wore a progressive air’.³⁰ In his work on Federation and nationalism, Robert Birrell highlights the importance of the progressive ‘civic element’ of Australian nationalism at this time, derived from ‘the citizenship ideals which shaped the early nationalist’s view of their nation’.³¹ Birrell suggests that the first decade after Federation was a ‘great era of reform’ at the state and voluntary levels, as well as in the Federal arena. Middle-class reformers, very active in areas such as social welfare, health and education, sought to advance the rights of citizens, for the greater good of the community. Birrell proposes that the emphasis nationalists placed on the creation of a nation of people linked by their common citizenship promoted a sense of duty to fellow citizens, and that where ‘national identity incorporates “civic” ideals it encourages those seeking to advance their nation to work towards these ideals’.³² This is demonstrated in Australia with the establishment of state-run education systems throughout the colonies, available to all regardless of religion or national origin.³³

As Andrew Vincent and Raymond Plant have noted, citizenship in this sort of context required that ‘individuals should be able to act for themselves as effectively as possible, to define their own needs and to seek to make institutions

²⁹ Irving, *To constitute a nation*, p. 9.

³⁰ Hirst, *The sentimental nation*, p. 14.

³¹ R Birrell, *A nation of our own: citizenship and nation-building in federation Australia*, Melbourne, 1995, p. 11. Birrell bases his understanding of citizenship ideals on the work of English sociologist TH Marshall, and his essay ‘Citizenship and social class’ (1950), in which he analysed the concept of the social rights of the citizen (as opposed to civil and political rights). Birrell argues that the 1890s depression in Australia demonstrated to its citizens that the colonial governments were incapable of responding effectively to the crisis, and ‘this prompted a new, more collectivist response, during which reformers acknowledged that the community must accept greater responsibility for citizen welfare’, decisively influencing the thrust of the nationalist movement (p. 44).

³² Birrell, *A nation of our own*, p. 16.

³³ Birrell, *A nation of our own*, p. 11. Birrell sees these forces waning after WWI, but suggests that ‘the federal leaders seized their short window of opportunity to put their stamp on Australian institutions and values for decades thereafter’ (p. 17).

more responsive'.³⁴ Citizenship demanded a 'capacity of self-help' that 'depended upon education, of understanding one's environment and the political context within which life is lived'.³⁵ Such a citizenship ideal was highly congruent with the ideals of the liberal model of the public library as it was developing in Australia. The library's role in increasing the intellectual and practical wealth of the community had been consistently acknowledged by local commentators. The public library was thus rhetorically situated in a civic framework with many parallels to that maintained by the civic nationalists, and was ideal for recruitment for nationalist ends. Its identification with civics allowed it to play a strong role in the nationalism promoted by federalist politicians such as Alfred Deakin, who promoted ideals of a 'new world' free of 'old world' social divisions, in which all could look forward to the advancement of citizenship rights.

Patriotism and professionalism in the public library

Librarians at the principal state libraries often had close connections with those who were driving Federation from the 1890s, many of whom served the libraries as advisors or trustees.³⁶ Public librarians — particularly those positioned close to the intellectual debates at the state and national level — were challenged by the implications of these political and social changes around Federation. The desire to educate the adult population and instil civic values to further the advance of the

³⁴ A Vincent and R Plant, *Philosophy, politics, and citizenship: the life and thought of the British idealists*, Oxford, UK; New York, 1985, p. 150. In this usage, the term 'institution' refers to 'the state' and its component 'civic institutions' as used by Oxford philosopher TH Green. Green saw these institutions as moral entities that existed for moral purposes. 'Institutions, though built on customs and habits, were nevertheless seen as repositories of man's ideas of the social good, at their worst, only hardened and outgrown purposes' (p. 52). Green believed that education was central to citizenship. Alistair Black identifies the important relationship between Green, and the British Minister for Education HAL Fisher, who formulated the Public Libraries Act of 1919 that improved library provision in rural Britain: A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996, pp. 148-151.

³⁵ Vincent and Plant, *Philosophy, politics, and citizenship*, p. 150.

³⁶ Sir William Sowden was an example of a committed nationalist who had strong associations with the promotion of the institution of the public library. Sowden was a founding member of the Australian Natives Association branch in Adelaide in 1887. Sowden had a long-standing association with the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery in Adelaide, and was also an active member of the Library Association of Australia in its first incarnation from 1896-1902, and in its second incarnation three decades later. In this professional body Sowden brought his patriotism for Australia to bear on concerns such as the inclusion of Australian literature in libraries, and the need for municipalities to assume greater responsibility for local library services to ensure wider access across the national population. Sowden's contribution in the 1920s and 1930s will be discussed in Chapter 6.

nation emphasised the necessity for universal access to libraries, disregarding class and overcoming geographic dispersal. Combined with the push to extend the role of the free public library in Australia was a growing interest in other ways in which Australian libraries might support the national values of the Commonwealth.

The social, intellectual and sometimes-political engagement of library leaders and library advisors with nationalism and federal issues coincided fruitfully with what Boyd Rayward has identified as a 'readiness' for professionalisation amongst Australian librarians in the 1890s.³⁷ Librarians recognised that the issues facing public libraries in the new nation deserved the 'closest attention of social economists and reformers',³⁸ and a new spirit of collegiality among themselves. The first professional library association in Australia was established in 1896, when 'federative movements of more than one kind occupied the minds of men'.³⁹ This was the 'short lived but influential', and intentionally progressive, Library Association of Australasia.⁴⁰ Australian librarians saw the opportunity to capitalise on the political impetus for national cooperation offered by Federation, seeing for themselves an important role in the nation building process by enacting philosophies of national efficiency and progressivism in the public library context.⁴¹ This was matched by the desire to emulate what they saw as the 'great and significant educative forces' that had been given to the library associations founded in England and the United States in the 1870s.⁴² As Wayne Wiegand has observed, the notion of cooperative library services for areas 'beyond the city or village boundaries' developed late in the nineteenth century in the United States, as part of a national trend towards 'larger units of service'.⁴³ It is unsurprising that Australian librarians would see such examples of systems and cooperation in

³⁷ WB Rayward, 'The early diffusion abroad of the Dewey decimal classification: Great Britain, Australia, Europe', in G Stevenson and J Kramer-Greene (eds.), *Melvil Dewey: the man and the classification*, Albany, NY, 1983, p. 166.

³⁸ EB Taylor, 'Municipal libraries', in *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898: with three appendices*, Sydney, 1898, p. 89.

³⁹ N Lynravn, *Libraries in Australia*, Melbourne, 1948, p. 19.

⁴⁰ DJ Jones, 'Public Libraries: Institutions of the highest educational value', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 161.

⁴¹ Birrell, *Federation*, p. 165.

⁴² Lynravn, *Libraries in Australia*, p. 19.

⁴³ WA Wiegand and DG Davis, *Encyclopedia of library history*, New York, 1994, p. 522.

international libraries, and make the connection between nationalising sentiments prompted by Federation and the progressive features of their profession.

The stated objectives of the Library Association of Australasia were to foster cooperation between libraries and library workers across the new nation and the region (nominally including New Zealand and other British dependencies in the South Pacific⁴⁴), 'to obtain their co-operation in all matters connected with library management, legislation and improvement', to 'stimulate public interest in establishing and improving libraries, and thus to bring the best reading within reach of all', and to 'develop and strengthen the Public Library as an essential part of the Australian Educational System'.⁴⁵ Principally concerned with the development of public libraries, the Association encouraged increased skills in library management without offering any formal professional training, which was unavailable in Australia in the period. The reading of international books on library economy was encouraged, to develop skills in cataloguing, classification systems, and 'labour-saving system[s] of issue and record'.⁴⁶ The Association published a short-lived journal *The Library Record of Australasia*, between 1901 and 1902, which helped to disseminate information about library economy and current developments.⁴⁷ It also ran conferences, and published the papers in full. Michael Talbot, in his article examining the history of the Library Association of Australasia, considers that '[i]n a variety of ways, especially to do with cataloguing and classification, the Association did have an influence in helping to spread modern and improved methods and attitudes'.⁴⁸

⁴⁴ When the Association reformed after a gap of 26 years in 1928, 'Australasia' was dropped for the more continental title 'Library Association of Australia'.

⁴⁵ Quoted in Lynravn, *Libraries in Australia*, p. 19.

⁴⁶ *Library record of Australasia*, 1901, vol. 1, p. 2. AJ Taylor, for example, reported to his trustees that he had read the two 'standard works on Library Economy' by James Duff Brown and John Henry Quinn prior to his study tour to England in 1905: AJ Taylor, 'Librarians visit to London Report October 1, 1905', in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

⁴⁷ See M Keane, 'Education for librarianship in colonial Australia', in E Morrison and M Talbot (eds.) *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia: papers from the forum on Australian colonial library history held at Monash University 1-2 June, 1984*, Clayton, Vic., 1985, pp. 110-17.

⁴⁸ M Talbot, 'The Library Association of Australasia: a professional body?', in Morrison and Talbot, *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia*, p. 124.

The early conferences of the association, which ran over a number of days, addressed themes such as international classification schemes, efficient provision of lending services across the new nation, and the implications of the provision of fiction. Evening lectures by prominent ‘cultivated men’, representing the wider ‘enlightened community’, helped to broaden the approach of the conferences beyond the technical and practical concerns of public libraries.⁴⁹ Within these contexts, the issues that defined Australian libraries as distinct were frequently raised. A paper presented at the 1902 conference by Amos William Brazier, (deputy librarian at the Public Library in Melbourne) entitled ‘The meaning of the Library movement in Australia and its importance to the Commonwealth’ epitomised the optimism focused on national objectives. Brazier alluded to the ‘commonwealth of letters’, which complemented the political Commonwealth, and suggested that the ‘common wealth’ existed in ‘cultural banks’, including libraries, galleries, gardens, architecture, national theatres of opera and orchestras.⁵⁰ Invoking a liberal and civic ideal of access to all citizens of the nation, Brazier argued that public libraries were the ‘University of the people’, providing a ‘higher, or rather, truer, education’.⁵¹

The notion of stock control for nationalist purposes evolved and was naturalised at this time. At the 1898 conference Mungo MacCallum, professor of English Literature at Sydney University, urged all the Australian colonial libraries to make a specialty of Australian literature.⁵² In considering what were the ‘the essential

⁴⁹ Circular, 1900, sent by Sir Samuel Way and JRG Adams in preparation for Adelaide conference, quoted in Talbot, ‘The Library Association of Australasia’, p. 119.

⁵⁰ AW Brazier, ‘The meaning of the library movement in Australia and its importance to the Commonwealth’, in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, p. 52.

⁵¹ Ibid. The notion of the public library as the ‘university of the people’ was a common one in the period, but was usefully invoked in the contexts of the new professionalism among librarians at national conferences. EL Armstrong also made a similar reference in his paper on the ‘Proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’ at the same conference. Stielow and Corsaro credit American librarian and bibliographer Melvil Dewey with legitimising public libraries as the ‘universities of the people’, as part of a Progressive vision for enhancing social order, and thus emphasising the necessity for civic responsibility to support them: FJ Stielow and J Corsaro, ‘The Carnegie question and the Public Library Movement in progressive era New York’, in RS Martin (ed.), *Carnegie denied: communities rejecting Carnegie Library construction grants, 1898-1925*, Westport, Ct., 1993, pp. 36-37.

⁵² MW MacCallum, ‘The place of fiction in libraries’, *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October 1898*, pp. 75-76.

functions of a State Library in a young country', MacCallum proposed that a state library 'may legitimately aim at being a great repository of documents', but given the exigencies of space, 'the ideal of a general reservoir' was 'not to be entertained', with the exception of one department: that of Australian literature. Here, MacCallum urged, all the individual state libraries in each of the Australian colonies:

...should make a specialty of Australian literature. They should aim at acquiring every scrap of print or MS dealing with the history of the continent, and especially their own section of it, that may with any likelihood turn out to be significant. This they are bound to do for the sake of the future historian of our future federated Australia.⁵³

MacCallum clearly articulated a nationalistic vision for the state libraries of Australia, one in which the library acted as an archival custodian of the culture of the nation as a whole. MacCallum considered the other aims of the state library should be to acquire books for 'investigators' that would otherwise be unprocurable, and to be the 'magazine of liberal culture', 'generally an educative agency', and 'a storehouse of the thoughts and knowledge and ideas that are most likely to enlarge, emancipate, and nourish the mind'.⁵⁴ MacCallum advised librarians 'to make the library a reservoir of miscellanea, especially of Australian miscellanea, and a repository to which the specialist may betake himself for help'.⁵⁵

Thus Australian librarians embedded what were actually radical sentiments (the promotion of collecting relating to the local instead of the metropolitan) within existing Australian public library discourse (collections as morally educative), and did it in such a way as for it to appear natural and commonsensical. Federation

⁵³ MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', pp. 75-76.

⁵⁴ MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', pp. 76, 77.

⁵⁵ MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', p. 77. Osborne suggests that librarian HCL Anderson 'stood almost alone in asserting that collecting should be undertaken for the sake of future research workers, a principle of book collecting which is of paramount importance for historical-research libraries': AD Osborn and M Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, 1901-27 and the origins of the National Library of Australia*, Canberra, 1989, p. 54. In fact, this nationalistic goal for the key Australian public libraries was asserted fairly regularly in this period, as seen in MacCallum's presentation.

and national patriotism directly stimulated a new alertness to the emerging role for the institution. This change in Australian public library discourse is as significant as it was rapid, tied as it was to the new notion of a unified national purpose for 'libraries-as-archives'. It is important to realise that the promotion of Australian literature and those 'miscellanea' which might assist in the formation and elucidation of Australian identity (historical and contemporary) was not the product of a counter-hegemonic discourse of the sort that Peatling has identified in the Irish public library in the early twentieth century.⁵⁶ The Australian public library never evinced an antipathetic attitude to English literature in this period. Rather, emerging awareness in the public library of an Australian literary culture in the context of British heritage spoke clearly to concurrent patriotisms.

Invocations of nation

Within the contexts of the newly national conference forums, Australian librarians increasingly employed patriotic terminology in articulating their maturing vision of Australian library provision. The use of the descriptor 'national' applied to the public library is of particular interest, and raises a number of questions as to the meaning generated by the word in the period in different contexts, and the intent behind its use. As Tony Bennett has observed, 'the use of a nationing rhetoric is never an innocent choice'.⁵⁷ In this context it is useful to consider Graeme Turner's analysis of aspects of 'invocations of nationality' in Australian culture. Turner reflects upon Clive James' observation that Australian television advertising was 'incredibly nationalistic', in comparison to British advertisements, which were 'relatively modest in their invocation of nationality'.⁵⁸ James, according to Turner, assumed that this invocation of Australian-ness indicated a national arrogance on the part of his compatriots. But

⁵⁶ Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 44.

⁵⁷ T Bennett, 'The shape of the past', in G Turner (ed.), *Nation, culture, text: Australian cultural and media studies*, London; New York, 1993, p. 75. Bennett, discussing the concept of 'national heritage' argues that the relations between artefacts — specifically in museums — are organised by specific discourses about nationalism and which he thus describes as 'nationing rhetoric'. He suggests that relics of specific social groups 'come to serve as symbols of the essential unity of the nation, or to highlight its recently achieved unity, by standing for a divisiveness which is past' (p. 75).

⁵⁸ G Turner, 'Introduction: Moving the margins: theory, practice and Australian cultural studies', in Turner, *Nation, culture, text*, 1993, p. 8.

Turner suggests that the phenomenon can be read in another way: that it is in fact *incantatory* in aspect, functioning to ‘call the nation into being’. When a nation is not already naturalised, Turner observes, it must be ‘explicitly figured ... as image, myth — nation’.⁵⁹

These observations have particular resonance in examining the uses of the term ‘national’ to describe certain libraries in Australia. It is useful here to compare its use in the public library with the use of the term by the major colonial museums, which were, as we have seen, closely linked in a number of cases with the ‘state’ libraries, and art galleries. Graeme Davison argues that a different conception of ‘national’ was in use when these major colonial museums were established in the nineteenth century. When these institutions were given ‘that troublesome title “national”’, he suggests:

...their founders would not usually have aspired to define or debate national identity. The prime or ostensible purpose of the museum, and what gave it the name “national”, was that it was expected to serve a national purpose, namely to educate, enlighten and civilize the people by exposing them to scientific specimens of the natural world and to the heritage of humanity.⁶⁰

Knowledge, Davison observes, ‘was assumed to be global, not national’ and its diffusion was expected to be international, as well as national.⁶¹ Alan Atkinson offers a different alternative to the use of the term ‘national’ in the late nineteenth century. He suggests that the separate colonies, particularly New South Wales and Tasmania, may have identified overtly as ‘nations’ in themselves, as citizens attached actively to region, through regional concerns (commerce and sociability) and regional politics and governance. The use of the term ‘national’ in the period for institutions such as banks, libraries and museums may have reflected this

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ G Davison, ‘What should a national museum do?: learning from the world’, in M Lake (ed.), *Memory, monuments and museums: the past in the present*, Carlton, Vic., 2006, p. 94.

⁶¹ Ibid.

notion of intense regional identification that expressed itself in ‘sub-national’ terms.⁶²

The title ‘national’ to describe particular libraries increased in the latter years of the nineteenth century and after Federation. At the public library in Sydney, for example, GD Richardson finds the use of the term ‘national’ library ‘came into more frequent use by about 1890’.⁶³ Principal librarian HCL Anderson was the ‘man who finally gave it point and direction and even something of a philosophy’.⁶⁴ Significantly, Richardson finds an aspect of this drive was his ‘sense of history and posterity and of continuity in the affairs of men’.⁶⁵ His philosophy for a ‘national library’, which was interchangeable with the term ‘State Library’, ‘is one provided for the students of the State — the men and women who are going to derive great advantage from the books, and who are probably going to hand on the advantage to other people’.⁶⁶ It is important to recognise that Anderson also courted the major private benefactor David Scott Mitchell, using the higher-status term ‘State Library’, rather than ‘Sydney Public Library’.⁶⁷ Other donors found status in the conception of the ‘national’ library. At the Melbourne Public Library, when the Queen’s Gold Medal of the Royal Geographical Society that had belonged to eminent geographer John Arrowsmith, was presented by Arrowsmith’s nephew and historian John Shillinglaw, the

⁶² A Atkinson, ‘Tasmania and the multiplicity of nations: 2005 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture’, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 52, no. 4, 2005, p. 196. Atkinson suggests that ‘Tasmania became increasingly national as it became increasingly democratic in the 1880s and ‘90s’, and that ‘we find in Hobart talk of Tasmania’s need for a “national bank”, of the apathy of the people as a “national curse” and so on’. Atkinson concludes only that the meaning of ‘nation’ was ‘rather different from what it means today’, and suggests further research to better understand ‘at least from the imaginative point of view’ the understandings of nation in the period. Atkinson urges alertness to the ways nations might ‘unfold *within* each other’, as well as the ways they emerge from transnational forces.

⁶³ GD Richardson, *The colony’s quest for a national library*, Sydney, 1960, p. 22.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ Richardson, *The colony’s quest for a national library*, p. 23.

⁶⁶ HCL Anderson, quoted in Richardson, *The colony’s quest for a national library*, p. 24.

⁶⁷ Melbourne public librarian EL Armstrong, while unable to criticize David Scott Mitchell’s generosity to the Sydney Public Library, did publicly regret that Mitchell’s outstanding collection of Australian literature was going to be bequeathed to a ‘state’ library, rather than forming the basis of a central ‘Federal Library of the Commonwealth’: ELT Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, pp. 62-70.

donors stated that they had chosen the library as the recipient as being a vehicle for 'the national collection'.⁶⁸

Australian library commentator John Metcalfe observed in 1968 that the 'national library idea' inherited from the British Museum influenced the Australian 'state' libraries, encouraging aspirations to be 'national in name for much the same reasons as the Scottish and Welsh national libraries' (although he noted that there were not the localised ethnic differences in Australia that were found in Great Britain).⁶⁹ It is evident that for Metcalfe the term 'national' to describe the major regional Australian libraries was a means to define *difference* between parts of the country. This difference could most clearly be signalled through the dual goal of enhancing collections that reflected the literature and manuscript archives of the state or region, as well as the nation.⁷⁰

Generally the term 'national' was applied to the major state reference libraries supported by state or colonial governments that together archived the written heritage of the young nation, as opposed to the local or regional libraries (principally within Mechanics' Institutes) that increasingly focused their collections on fiction, and were largely funded by local municipalities. 'National' appears at times to have connoted 'Australian', sometimes reflected colonial pride and independence from the other Australian colonies, sometimes suggested 'state' in opposition to 'civic', sometimes reflected patriotism to British origins, and always promoted status and significance to a larger construction of identity than that offered by a local connection. It was used deliberately to raise the status of the institution by linking it with the idealistic aspects of civic nationalism, and also more subtly to naturalise the new precepts of public library function in a new

⁶⁸ 'Donation to the Public Library', *Argus* (Melbourne), 23 May 1885, p. 5.

⁶⁹ J Metcalfe, 'Library development in Australia: a case study of development in a colonial and continental country', in LR McColvin and RF Vollans (eds.), *Libraries for the people: international studies in librarianship in honour of Lionel R. McColvin*, London, 1968, p. 135.

⁷⁰ James Gore finds this motivation in the 'national' museums of the nineteenth-century Australian colonies, where the use of 'national' in their title was indicative of a 'desire to establish independent colonies of the empire' and 'generally an assertion of the individual autonomy of that particular colony': JM Gore, 'Representations of history and nation in museums in Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand: the National Museum of Australia and the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2002, pp. 163-164.

nation. These effects can be clearly seen at the Tasmanian Public Library in the period around Federation, and will be discussed later in this chapter.

The promotion of a centralised ‘national library’

The creation of a new ‘Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, ‘worthy of the Australian nation’, as a centralised archive of — and for — the nation, was a key topic at the Library Association meetings, a Joint Library Committee having been established to develop recommendations for the new institution within four weeks of Federation in 1901.⁷¹ At the Library Association conference in 1902, Edmund la Touche Armstrong presented an important and lengthy paper on ‘The proposed federal library of the commonwealth’.⁷² E Morris Miller, who attended the conference, considered Armstrong’s presentation ‘historic’, recognising that the ‘recent inauguration of the Commonwealth’ had ‘brought to the front the question of the establishment of an Australian national library’.⁷³ The presentation, Miller observed, ‘openly conceded that a national library, with its librarians, would soon be in the offing’.⁷⁴

⁷¹ A Galligan, ‘Cultural in-sites: a history of the National Library of Australia’, *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2000, p. 100.

⁷² Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’. A paper pleading for the creation of a national museum was also presented at the 1902 national conference. AT Woodward, the speaker, proposed a national museum on the site of the national capital, including ‘departments of Archaeology, Paintings, Prints and Drawings, and a Library; also an Australian and natural history department’. Woodward considered the proposal was urgent, partly because of the ‘difficulty of collecting records and objects of early Australian history’ which was ‘becoming daily more difficult’, and which had been ‘shamefully neglected’ in collecting practices of the major museums to date: AT Woodward, ‘A plea for a national museum’, in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, pp. 94-96. Armstrong was prominent in the organization and activities of the Library Association, acting as secretary for the organization for the six years of its existence.

⁷³ EM Miller, ‘Some public library memories, 1900-1913’, *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 9, no. 35, 1985, pp. 63-64.

⁷⁴ Ibid. HCL Anderson had also been actively interested in the creation of a national library since Federation, and had written directly to Prime Minister Edmund Barton within two months of the creation of the nation suggesting that it would be ‘worth your while to take some steps to secure from the first of the year all the current Australian literature’: HCL Anderson to Edmund Barton, 25 February 1901, quoted in P Biskup, *Library models and library myths: the early years of the National Library of Australia*, Sydney, 1983, p. 14. Anderson was among a number of library professionals including Armstrong and Frank Bladen (from the Public Library of New South Wales) who presented proposals for the formation of the national library to Barton. Barton had been a trustee of the Public Library in Sydney before becoming Prime Minister, and thus had some interest in, and understanding of, library issues.

Armstrong began his paper by acknowledging that ‘one of the most noticeable features of the social organization of the leading nations of the world’ in the past twenty-five years was the ‘remarkable increase in the importance and usefulness of the public libraries’.⁷⁵ The new nation of Australia, like these other ‘leading nations’, needed its own ‘modern national library’. Armstrong observed that the ‘two great functions of a national library’ were to ‘collect as far as possible *everything* in the field of literature that is worth preserving’ and making the collection ‘as serviceable as possible to the whole community’ [original emphasis].⁷⁶ Priorities for collecting should be firstly ‘standard works in all branches of literature’; after this, ‘in an Australian library, a special effort should be made to obtain everything relating to the history of the country, or in any way connected with the country’.⁷⁷ As later bibliographic research was to demonstrate, this could include in printed publications alone some 19,000 items produced in the colonies of Australia up to 1900.⁷⁸ Armstrong also considered the pressing question of public access to the nation’s national library, given that rights of citizenship meant right of access under the rules of ‘absolute freedom of admittance’: ‘A dire alternative, truly, to recognize the National Library as a resort for the loafer and the vagrant’.⁷⁹

Nationalism, as a number of library commentators have observed, is typically a key catalyst for the formation of national libraries. Library historian Kenneth Humphreys finds that typically a national library ‘focused the people’s attention on their national identity, their past and their future’, and played a crucial part in legitimising and confirming cultural heritage and national unity through ‘printed books and manuscripts in the national language on the country’s intellectual, economic and political activities’.⁸⁰ Maurice Line suggests that the national library typically aimed to perform a role to literature as the national museum did

⁷⁵ Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, p. 62.

⁷⁶ Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, pp. 64-65.

⁷⁷ Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, p. 65.

⁷⁸ JA Ferguson’s multi-volume *Bibliography of Australia*, published 1941- 69. This figure of over 19,000 is quoted in J Arnold, ‘A commonwealth: recording Australia’s heritage’, *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1992, pp. 123.

⁷⁹ Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, p. 65.

⁸⁰ KW Humphreys, *A national library in theory and in practice*, London; Wolfeboro, NH, 1988, p. 23.

to artefacts: to become 'the national book archive, and a source of national pride'.⁸¹

In Britain the rise of nationalism based on the distinctiveness of the English literary and political character from the latter part of the eighteenth century directly fed into the formation of the national library collection housed in the British Museum. The national ideal was clearly articulated by Anthony Panizzi, chief librarian at the British Museum Library from 1856-66, who 'wanted the British Museum library ... to be the stronghold of British cultural and political identity'.⁸² Panizzi advised his trustees that in the first instance the 'attention of the Keeper of the emphatically British library ought to be directed most particularly to British works and to works relating to the British Empire; its religious, political and literary as well as scientific history; its laws, institutions, descriptions, commerce, arts, etc.' Of second importance was the collection of the 'old and rare, as well as the critical editions of ancient classics', and thirdly 'the best editions of standard works' of foreign literature 'for critical purposes or for use'.⁸³ As Alberto Manguel observes, Panizzi saw the British national library as 'a portrait of the national soul'.⁸⁴ Humphreys argues that Panizzi's vision for the library of the British Museum had a 'pervading influence' on attitudes to national libraries in other countries, and suggests that the 'new' national libraries outside of Europe 'were not affected by the weight of the past, nor generally by the historical, political or geographical circumstances which had often had a deleterious effect on the development of the older libraries'.⁸⁵

As Jean Matthews has shown, in America the first intimation of the necessity to form a 'national collection' in a single central library emerged with the founding of the Smithsonian Institute in the 1840s. Congress agreed to form a 'great national library', but extensive debate emerged about the nature of the institution, the polar positions being the scholars/historians who were 'hoarders, to whom

⁸¹ MB Line and J Line, (eds.), *National libraries*, London, 1979, p. 1.

⁸² A Manguel, *The library at night*, New Haven, CT, 2008, p. 298.

⁸³ Humphreys, *A national library in theory and in practice*, p. 10.

⁸⁴ Manguel, *The library at night*, p. 299.

⁸⁵ Humphreys, *A national library in theory and in practice*, pp. 12, 20.

anything and everything might be valuable, however slight its intrinsic worth', and the scientists, who wanted a 'compact working library of current works'.⁸⁶ Matthews finds that advocates for a 'great national library' increasingly focused on the importance of history, and national history in particular, suggesting that 'American history not only offered as exciting a field for discovery as the physical universe, but one whose implications for national identity and for human existence in general were infinitely more important'. Library supporters such as congressman Charles W Upham suggested to Congress that the national library would have the unique role of collecting an archive of the nation's history, observing that the annals of all other countries were either lost or 'shrouded in fable', while America's was 'within the range of unclouded history'. The national library, Upham claimed, would ensure that the 'great social, moral, and political experiment here going on to test the last hope of humanity' could be 'described in clear and certain records'. Ultimately the Smithsonian Library did not take on such a role, the scientists winning out over the historians, but the debate on the formation of a national collection begun at this time had lasting implications, and saw the Library of Congress expand after the Civil War to become the national library of the United States.⁸⁷

In Australia, the American Library of Congress has typically been cited as the principal model upon which the new National Library was formed, although Peter Biskup has suggested that Australia's National Library was more of a 'home-grown product', a 'pragmatic solution' to Australia's peculiar problems'.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ JV Matthews, 'Libraries, books, and the nature of America: the creation of the Smithsonian Institution', in DG Davis (ed.), *Libraries and culture: proceedings of Library History Seminar VI, 19-22 March 1980, Austin, Texas*, Austin, 1981, pp. 161-62.

⁸⁷ It is interesting to compare Australian's enthusiasm for developing a national library with the slower start for an American national collection (although this occurred nearly 100 years earlier than in Australia). In his history of the Library of Congress, Carl Ostrowski finds that 'some political commentators expressed the opinion that the young nation had no pressing need for a national library at all, that such an institution was irrelevant or even injurious to the political goals of a republic'. The history of the Library up to the Civil War was marked, Ostrowski argues, by resistance to the democratization of American letters and American suspicion of European cultural artefacts, which influenced the slow development of the national library. See CM Ostrowski, 'The Library of Congress and the transformation of literary culture in America, 1782-1861', PhD Thesis, University of South Carolina, 1997, p. 9.

⁸⁸ Peter Biskup challenged the 'canonised' view, in 1983, which emerged in successive reports and commentaries on the library's development from early in the twentieth century, that the National

Belinda Tiffen argues that the example of the American Library of Congress was more significant to the development of the National Library of Australia than that of the British Museum, quoting Armstrong invoking the Library of Congress as ‘a model; a guide to be followed, not slavishly, but with discretion’.⁸⁹ Tiffen considers that the preference to develop the Parliamentary Library into a service like the Library of Congress signalled Australia’s ‘determination to forge a nation independent of its colonial past, as America had done’.⁹⁰

In any case, the proposed National Library in the newly Federated Australia embraced a vision of universality of knowledge, a desire to support intellectual and literary traditions in a new country, and a commitment to build a collection that reflected the history and aspirations of the nation. As Peter Biskup observes, for members of the Joint Library Committee formed to recommend on the development of the national library, the projected institution was ‘a monument to the Australian nation and a symbol of the country’s coming of age’.⁹¹ The evolution of Australia’s national library was actually a ‘slow, piecemeal transformation’, from its beginnings as the Federal Parliamentary Library in Melbourne to when it opened to the public in the national capital, Canberra, in 1935.⁹²

Library of Australia was consciously modelled on the Library of Congress: Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, pp. 2, 32-33.

⁸⁹ Armstrong, ‘The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth’, pp. 63-64.

⁹⁰ B Tiffen, ‘Recording the nation: nationalism and the history of the National Library of Australia’, *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, p. 345.

⁹¹ Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, p. 28.

⁹² Peter Biskup queries whether a national library concept was even viable immediately after Federation, especially as many of the key advisors to the process would have been aware of the fledging national collection that was emerging at the Public Library of New South Wales from the Mitchell Collection bequest: Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, pp. 24-25. The American example of multiple ‘national’ collections across a number of major libraries was one of justifications used for what might be seen as duplication in the concurrent formation of the Mitchell Library and the National Library: Joint Library Committee Report, ‘The Creation of a Great Library’, 1907, quoted in Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, p. 26. The fact that such a library was envisaged, even if not financially practicable, emphasises the strength of the nationalistic ‘sentimental’ impetus of the project. The acquisition of the Petherick Collection laid the foundations of the Australiana collection, which was not formally distinguished as a separate collection within the library until 1919. This is discussed further in later chapters.

Classification schemes in the national debate

In his analysis of the effects of nationalism in the British public library, Peatling has highlighted the significance of classification schemes in the articulation and potency of national identity. The classification of literature into national groups, Peatling suggests:

...reinforces people's consciousness of the physical and cultural boundaries of their own and other nations, and gives different levels of profile to different publications and themes in history and culture... In Foucault's terms, the uses of national units in classification is an "order of things", one of the ways of thinking about the world which are seemingly transparent and unavoidable, but are in fact constructed upon assumptions and theories, naturalized but not natural.⁹³

Australian librarians at the national conferences conceptualised and debated classification schemes that would acknowledge a new, privileged position for Australian material. Australian librarians were not backward in addressing classification for their collections in this period. JH Bowman notes that even in Britain there was little interest in classification in libraries until after 1894, when the 'long established closed access system began to give way to open access'.⁹⁴ Australian librarians were, however, faced with the added complexity of giving a system developed in the northern hemisphere applicability to Australasia and the Pacific.

All the major state libraries, apart from the Tasmanian Public Library, reclassified their collections with the Dewey Decimal Classification between 1892 and 1901. Although promoted as a crucial and progressive way to unify disparate classification schemes between Australian libraries, it was also problematic for Australian librarians who were trying to place Australian subject matter and literature within the system. It is interesting to consider that Australian libraries took up the Dewey system in preference to the Brown's Subject Classification, which rivalled the Dewey system in popularity in British libraries in the period.

⁹³ Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 36.

⁹⁴ JH Bowman, 'Classification in British public libraries: a historical perspective', *Library History*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2005, p. 143.

Brown's scheme, according to Bowman, made 'much better provision for British topics, especially for British places, than was possible in Dewey at the time'.⁹⁵ Matthew Battles argues that the emphasis in the Dewey system on efficient movement of books into the hands of readers meant that 'local interest and special needs were less important', and 'such reform came at the cost of local diversity'.⁹⁶

At the 1898 conference of Australian librarians, WH Ifould, then a cataloguing clerk at the Public Library of South Australia,⁹⁷ drew attention to the 'wretched' state of classification in Australian libraries, most of which continued with old schemes initiated on their founding and unimproved by the modern methods promulgated in the international library literature.⁹⁸ Ifould considered that 'the applicableness of the Dewey system to Australian libraries is a matter for serious consideration'. He noted that as Dewey Decimal Classification was an American system, 'Australian sections are very poorly classified, and in some classes it will be necessary for the Australian librarian to reclassify the local section and to give it a more convenient numbering'.⁹⁹ The 'heart of the defect', in Ifould's opinion, were the 'geographical divisions' in the areas from 990 to 999: he noted that 'in Australia, where so much space is given to local literature it would ill become us to hide it under the term Oceanica'.¹⁰⁰ By 1903 HCL Anderson had produced a revised version of Dewey's original classificatory system, adapted to the requirements of Australian libraries.¹⁰¹

⁹⁵ Bowman, 'Classification in British public libraries', p. 158.

⁹⁶ M Battles, *Library: an unquiet history*, New York, 2003, p. 141.

⁹⁷ Ifould rose to later prominence as the principal librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales, holding the position from 1912 to 1942. See JF Arnot, 'Ifould, William Herbert (1877-1969)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A090421b.htm?hlite=ifould>, accessed 10 May 2008.

⁹⁸ WH Ifould, 'Library classification', in *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898*, p. 19.

⁹⁹ Ifould, 'Library classification', pp. 20, 21.

¹⁰⁰ Ifould, 'Library classification', p. 21. Ifould uses the term 'Oceanica' rather than 'Oceania', indicating that this was also Dewey's description.

¹⁰¹ Brian Fletcher notes, however, that librarians at the Mitchell Library were obliged to further modify the Dewey system to suit the demands of the Australiana collection, covering not only books but also manuscripts, maps and pictures, and there was no 'logical and adequate classification of Australia, New Zealand and Pacific Regions' at the Mitchell for many decades: B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2007, p. 64. For a comprehensive examination of the 'Australianisation' of Dewey at the National Library, see Osborn and Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, 1901-27*, pp. 138-141.

For Australian librarians even the physical boundaries of the entity 'Australasia' were a matter of debate. Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright investigated the matter at length for the 1902 Association conference. Noting that '[i]t is rapidly becoming recognised to be the duty of libraries to collect the literature relating to the localities', Wright raised the concern that 'the greatest difficulty encountered, and not yet satisfied, is to decide what is Australasian?'¹⁰² In his investigation of historical and geographical sources from Lippincott's *Gazetteer* (1880) through *Encyclopaedia Britannica* (1875) through to the first use of the word 'Australasia' in de Brosse's *Histoire des navigations aux Terres Australes* (1756), Wright only found confusing diversity of opinion on the geographical constitution of the term, and plumped in the end for Professor AR Wallace's 'Australasia' in *Stanford's compendium of geography and travel*. Having defined the geographical boundaries, Wright considered more conceptual ones, suggesting inclusion of books from and about the region, and books by authors from the region but not about the region. Reprints of works in Australasia that were issued originally outside of the region were excluded, as were books by 'globetrotters' who 'do the colonies in a month'.¹⁰³

While it would be easy to place Australian librarians' wrestle with book classification as a purely pragmatic response to the changes brought about by the creation of the political unity 'Australasia', it is evident that there were greater complexities. While it would overstate the case to label changes to classification for the purposes of stock organisation as active manipulation of national identity, the classificatory adaptations 'named' Australia in a way that had not been considered before. They conceptualised both a more exclusive and at the same time expansive notion of what 'Australia' or 'Australasia' constituted, allowing librarians to 'manage' their geographically and socially transformed sphere of reference, and guiding library users to new ways to understand their relationship

¹⁰² H Wright, 'What is Australasian?', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting of the Library Association of Australasia held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, p. 98. Wright was to become the first Mitchell Librarian, in charge of the rich collection of Australiana donated by David Scott Mitchell to the Sydney Public Library.

¹⁰³ Wright, 'What is Australasian?', p. 101.

to the world as one set in binary opposition to alternative places and nations: 'us' versus 'them'.

The stimulus of Federation and the ideal of national confraternity were not enough to sustain the ambitious activities of the national association for librarians. The Library Association struggled from the start, and collapsed within six years. The writer of the editorial of the *Library Record of Australasia* for 1902 considered that the Association was 'before its time', struggling under difficulties that included:

...the small size and comparative poverty of our country towns; the long and expensive journeys that are necessary to enable members to meet in conference; the strenuous life that is the lot of most of our people; the apathy of the librarians and of the few who are in a position to assist our libraries.¹⁰⁴

E Morris Miller noted that in 1902, when he attended his first meeting in Melbourne (the third that the association had organised since its inception in 1896), the association was in a 'moribund' condition. 'Meetings were poorly attended', the chief participants being 'librarians in senior positions and trustees'.¹⁰⁵ Miller also noted that 'some jealousy existed among the Melbourne librarians towards their Sydney confrères mainly due to the energy of HCL Anderson ... who was presumed to be Americanising the public library in Australia'.¹⁰⁶

The association declined within a few years and ceased to exist by 1904. Writing on these early years Michael Talbot suggests that the body was 'remarkably toothless' when it came to 'any kind of practical organization towards promoting the cause of libraries'.¹⁰⁷ The sentimental impulse towards nationalisation in the

¹⁰⁴ 'The library record', *The Library Record of Australasia*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1902, pp. 43-44.

¹⁰⁵ Miller, 'Some public library memories, 1900-1913', p. 63. Michael Talbot notes that librarians Armstrong and Anderson sent circulars to country libraries asking them to join the Association, but the paternalistic attitude of the senior librarians of the state libraries towards their tiny country counterparts was a major factor contributing to the failure of the association: Talbot, 'The Library Association of Australasia', pp 120-22.

¹⁰⁶ Miller, 'Some public library memories, 1900-1913', p. 63.

¹⁰⁷ Talbot, 'The Library Association of Australasia', p. 120.

profession did not easily manifest itself in practical measures. Additionally the association represented the intellectuals at the top of the profession, and associated fields, rather than the managers of the small libraries scattered across the continent. For these smaller libraries, daily survival and the delivery of literature that the readers wanted, rather than literature that the library profession considered ‘uplifting’ and appropriate, was of far greater concern than activities stimulated by nation building or national sentiment. Further nationalising efforts among Australian librarians did not occur again until the late 1920s.¹⁰⁸

Parallel patriotisms at the Tasmanian Public Library

As the first part of this chapter has shown, evidence of national sentiment in the Australian public library can be found most broadly in areas such as the formation of a national association for librarians, and the professional debate concerning ‘national’ collections (including implications for library economy). The remainder of this chapter addresses the effect of nationalism at the local level, in the Tasmanian Public Library. It seeks to understand the influence of individuals in promoting or rejecting nationalist positions in the library. Chapter 1 addressed aspects of regional pride and identity in Tasmania, seen in the growing interest in local history in the last decades of the nineteenth century, and how this impacted upon the Tasmanian Public Library and its growing role as an archive for the community. This chapter, by contrast, seeks to differentiate (as much as possible) between such local loyalties and what could be related more broadly to national sentiment that might have been brought to a peak by the unifying impetus that culminated in Federation.

In 2001, when Michael Roe wrote his *The state of Tasmania: identity at Federation-time* in response to the anniversary of Australian Federation, he suggested that regionalism, nationalism, and British patriotism were ‘ever intermingled’ in Tasmania, ‘with a confusion no academic analyses can altogether resolve’.¹⁰⁹ This is clear from the scholarship that has emerged on the subject. By the end of the nineteenth century, Henry Reynolds considers that Tasmania had

¹⁰⁸ This later development will be discussed in Chapter 6.

¹⁰⁹ M Roe, *The state of Tasmania: identity at Federation-time*, Hobart, 2001, p. 1.

evolved a 'resigned, defiant patriotism' that proved to be 'precocious' and 'enduring' in the small close-knit community.¹¹⁰ Peter Bolger goes so far as to call this an 'Australian sentiment' that became apparent from the 1880s in the 'newly patriotic' community of Tasmania's capital city, Hobart.¹¹¹ Lloyd Robson suggests, more soberly, that a sense of nationality, either colonial or consciously Australia, was little more than 'skin-deep and the subject of rhetoric' in Tasmania, although he concedes the existence of 'a type of economic nationalism' around Federation.¹¹² Michael Roe finds that nationalism was only ever 'modest' in Tasmania, and that the state 'contributed but little to higher nationalistic culture'.¹¹³ WA Townsley argues that allegiances, while mixed, were always intense in Tasmania, and that in the first decade of the twentieth century nationalism 'had its strong adherents who were as fervent Australians as they were loyal Tasmanians'.¹¹⁴

Alan Atkinson argues along somewhat different lines. He proposes that there was a significant identificatory divide between Tasmania and the rest of Australia, to the degree that Tasmanians saw little connection between themselves and the mainland. This was an ambiguity about belonging to the Australian nation that was sometimes 'papered over' by a preferred identification with the larger body 'Australasia'.¹¹⁵ He argues that contemporary notions of what constituted a 'nation' were very different in the colonial period, and that Tasmanians in the late nineteenth century may have conceptualised the colony as a 'nation' in subordination to another nation (that of mainland Australia).¹¹⁶ Bain Attwood

¹¹⁰ Reynolds, 'Identity', pp. 459, 457.

¹¹¹ PF Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Canberra, 1973, p. 191.

¹¹² LL Robson, 'The Eldershaw Memorial Lecture 1971: themes in Australian history: Tasmania in the nineteenth century', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1972, p.13. Nevertheless, Robson finds that the Tasmanian community in the period 'put a good deal of emotional energy into being loyal and patriotic to the Empire and Australia, to Queen and country'.

¹¹³ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, pp. 221, 223.

¹¹⁴ WA Townsley, *Tasmania: from colony to statehood 1803-1945*, Hobart, 1991, pp. 246-247.

¹¹⁵ Atkinson, 'Tasmania and the multiplicity of nations', p. 192. Atkinson finds that this was particularly the case in the early nineteenth century when most Tasmanians were unfamiliar with maps, and even after the development of a cartographic imagination at the end of the nineteenth century, the 'notion of two distinct countries... [of Tasmania and Australia] was well embedded' (p. 191).

¹¹⁶ Atkinson, 'Tasmania and the multiplicity of nations', p. 197.

argues along the same lines, suggesting that all the colonies in Australia operated conceptually in this way, a fact that historians have ignored in their exploration of inclusive ‘nationalising’ narratives relating to Australia as a whole:

In the mid- to late nineteenth century, the primary focus of national sentiment and patriotic loyalty for most settlers was not Australia but Britain and one of its colonies. Moreover, this remained the case for several decades after the creation of the Australian nation state in 1901. The former colonies were the arenas in which public life was principally centred, and they were where the real work of historical imagination was mostly conducted.¹¹⁷

This perspective is borne out by contemporary accounts like that published anonymously in Hobart in 1840 entitled *Hobartia. A sketch*. This pamphlet describes the youthful settlement in the period as ‘A thriving nation on a desert coast’: ‘a nation with increasing power, in ages yet to come to bear a lofty name and send her sons adventuring o’er the mighty seas to course in distant parts the smiles of commerce, or bear war’s thundering engines to her foes’.¹¹⁸ These perspectives alert the historian to the tension — or at its most productive, the symbiosis — between the provincial, the continental, and the metropolitan, which marked many aspects of culture in Tasmania. A close study of ‘national’ rhetoric and activity in the context of the Tasmanian Public Library that embraces this diversity of identifications offers a further perspective on Tasmanian imaginings of self and place around Federation.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ B Attwood and H Doyle, *Possession: Batman’s treaty and the matter of history*, Carlton, Vic., 2009, p. 106. Brian Fletcher has also argued this point, suggesting that the ‘individuals and agencies which shaped and promoted Australian history as a field of knowledge and enquiry have operated less at the national than at the colonial and state level’: BH Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, Kensington, NSW, 1993, p. xvii.

¹¹⁸ Anon., *Hobartia A sketch*, 1840, p. 10. The author also refers to the Aboriginals of Tasmania as the ‘surviving mourners of a nation dead’, who ‘tread upon their nation’s tomb’ (pp. 11-12). This use of ‘nation’ in relation to a notion of unified indigenes was also common in the nineteenth century, and is equally so today.

¹¹⁹ Alan Atkinson urges historians to consider nationalism in the context of the ‘nineteenth-century multiplicity of nations, of nationhood as a variously defined, mutually overlapping, frequently evanescent sense of community and place’, and suggests that Tasmania ‘makes a first-class intellectual lever’ for lifting up, exposing and undermining the absolutist ideas about nationalism found in much Australian historiography: Atkinson, ‘Tasmania and the multiplicity of nations’, p. 197.

The diverse and contiguous patriotic sentiments found in Tasmania at Federation were a direct product of the particular circumstances of Tasmanian development, through its physical isolation (both from the centre of Empire, and from the mainland of Australia), its ‘peculiar’ history and its geography.¹²⁰ Tasmania’s landscape fostered a sense of belonging through an apparent physical likeness to Britain (at least in comparison to the other Australian colonies) and encouraged a pride of place that was emotionally connected to British roots.¹²¹ Recognised by contemporaries as the colony in Australia most closely reminiscent of Britain due to its mild climate and its ‘old world’ atmosphere of stone houses, churches and bridges, Tasmania’s citizens continued to look to Britain as much as they did to the mainland colonies throughout the nineteenth century. In Anthony Trollope’s well-known phrase from 1873, ‘[e]verything in Tasmania is more English than is England herself’.¹²²

The occasion of Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee in 1897, which in Helen Irving’s words ‘set the pattern for an Australian *fin de siècle* celebration on a national scale’,¹²³ was taken in Tasmania as an opportunity to demonstrate the strength of the community’s ongoing loyalty to the British crown. The occasion was to be marked by a civic memorial, which on the request of the Queen would be ‘some benevolent work of a general character’. The Jubilee gave trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library hope that the physical limitations of the existing library might be addressed with the provision of a new building. The depression of the 1890s had affected Tasmania, as it did the mainland states, with a direct impact on the prosperity of public services such as the library: Townsley describes the regression of these services as one of ‘public squalor’.¹²⁴

¹²⁰ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 1.

¹²¹ Reynolds, ‘Identity’, pp. 458–459. Reynolds confirms that local pride did not extend to history, as we have seen in Chapter 1, until the last decades of the nineteenth century, due to the shame surrounding penal society. Attachment to place was instead the key source for regional and local pride, rather than to society or institutions.

¹²² A Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, London, 1873, vol. 1, p. 37.

¹²³ Irving, *To constitute a nation*, p. 8.

¹²⁴ Townsley, *Tasmania*, p. 218.

British precedents existed for library largesse related to the celebration of the Monarchy's jubilees. As Peatling has observed, Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in 1887, and to a lesser extent the Diamond Jubilee in 1897, was a 'rapid spur' to library provision, through gifts and adoptions that substantiated the relationship between public libraries and the British monarchy.¹²⁵ The colony of Western Australia had also erected its first free public library in Perth to celebrate the Golden Jubilee, with £5,000 voted by the Legislative Council for the purpose. The library, when it opened in 1889, was called the 'Victoria Public Library' in honour of the monarch.¹²⁶ Tasmanian Public Library trustees were probably aware of these examples, and could entertain a reasonable hope of a similar outcome in Hobart. A citizens' committee formed to 'decide on the most appropriate method of commemorating the longest (and most prosperous) reign in English history' ultimately approved the proposal of a new public library building, from options which included a clock tower for the Town Hall, a children's hospital, a new wing for the Museum, a training ship, and a convalescent home.¹²⁷ The *Mercury* observed that 'the citizens very much approved of a public library' as a means to show gratitude for the civic and institutional benefits brought to the colony by its ongoing connection with Britain. The public library was a proposal that, in JB Walker's estimation, 'seemed to be the one which combined practicability with the greatest utility'.¹²⁸

The new Jubilee library building did not eventuate, due to Premier Philip Oakley Fysh's refusal to fund the work. Ironically, within five years, funding for a new

¹²⁵ Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 42.

¹²⁶ P Biskup, 'The Public Library of Western Australia', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1960, p. 4. The Victoria Public Library changed its name to the Public Library of Western Australia in 1904, to reduce confusion with the Public Library in the state of Victoria. Leigh Hays observes that the strength of the imperial connection with the Victoria Library influenced the slowness of the Library to begin collecting local archival materials. He notes that as an 'imperial institution, it was intended to improve the population and strengthen Western Australia's ties with the Empire by providing similar reading materials to those acceptable in the best British public libraries', and that it is 'extremely doubtful that the legislators imagined local publications belonging to that "higher class of literature" it hoped would be available at the new library': L Hays, *Worth telling, worth keeping: a guide to the collections of the J. S. Battye Library of West Australian History*, Perth, W.A., 2002, p. 9.

¹²⁷ JB Walker and PB Walker, *Prelude to Federation (1884-1898): extracts from the journal of James Backhouse Walker*, Hobart, 1978, p. 141.

¹²⁸ 'Hobart Jubilee Memorial', *Mercury* (Hobart), 13 April 1897, p. 3.

library building was to be gained from the library philanthropist and arch anti-monarchist Andrew Carnegie, who had made his fortune building the modern steel industry in North America.¹²⁹ The Jubilee proposal, if it had gone ahead, would have ‘branded’ the new public library building with British monarchic connections; instead, when it was finally constructed with Carnegie funds in 1907, the building spoke to new-world success and the shedding of old patriarchies.¹³⁰ The success of the application for Carnegie funding also highlights emerging local patriotism and confidence. The trustees’ written application to Carnegie drew attention to the ‘high-class literary character’ of the collection and the paucity of fiction (Carnegie notoriously disapproved of modern fiction in public libraries at this time). Significantly, it also highlighted the ‘valuable collection of works relating to the early history of these Colonies’, particularly in its collection of early Tasmanian newspapers ‘of great rarity’.¹³¹ This dual emphasis in the description of the library collections on British heritage *and* nationally significant collections marks an important shift in the trustees’ conception of the value of the institution.

Island patriotism was also at work when the foundation stone was laid for the new Carnegie library building. The ceremony took place on 23 February 1904, a

¹²⁹ Carnegie harboured a dislike of Royalty, and had refused a public library request for Carnegie funding to celebrate the Royal Jubilee in 1887, as Carnegie considered ‘a Royal family is an insult to every other in the land’, and he was therefore morally unable to subscribe: P Jenkinson, ‘Heritage and the public library: the influence and interpretation of heritage in the English public library from 1850 to the present, with particular attention to the provision of local studies’, PhD Thesis, Leeds Metropolitan University, 1999, p. 25.

¹³⁰ Despite the association with Carnegie’s American financial successes, the trustees saw Carnegie funding as emerging from British connections: trustees gained their information about Carnegie funding directed to ‘any Free Public Library in the Empire’ largely from the British press (Minutes of trustees meeting 12 August 1902, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart), or from reprints of British press notices in Australian papers, such as the note in the *Adelaide Advertiser*: ‘Mr. Carnegie’s munificence. Another free library’, reflecting on the donation of £30,000 pounds for a library at Marylebone, and the £10,000 for the Cork Free Library, UK. (18 August, 1902). The philanthropic implications of the Carnegie funding will be discussed in Chapter 3 of this thesis.

¹³¹ CM Tenison and G Kerr to A Carnegie, 15 August 1902, copy in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart. The trustees also pointed out that while other state capitals in Australia had already been provided with buildings at the expense of their respective governments, ‘the financial position of the State of Tasmania, owing mainly to the losses in revenue consequent on Federation, does not allow of any extraneous expenditure except on public works of strict necessity’.

public holiday described by Michael Roe as the ‘peak’ of celebrations for Tasmania’s centenary, which had occupied public interest in a variety of forms since September 1903.¹³² The ceremony was followed in the afternoon by the unveiling of a plinth at Risdon Cove commemorating Lieutenant John Bowen’s establishment of the first British settlement of the island in 1803. These civic rituals helped to blend past and present, and identifications both local and British.

Federalism in the Tasmanian Public Library

The approaching federation of the colonies introduced a new urgency to nascent nationalism, as Tasmanians were obliged to consider their economic and social relationship with the mainland. The Federal movement had considerable support in Tasmania. The strength of ‘Australian sentiment’ was proved in the first 1898 national referendum on Federation, where Tasmanians voted 81.28 per cent in favour of federation, and in the second referendum in 1899, 94.44 per cent in favour, placing Tasmania as the state with the highest approval for the proposal.¹³³ The strength of the vote, Townsley considers, was ‘a victory ... of Australian patriotism over provincialism and parochialism’.¹³⁴ As Hirst notes, the colonies of Tasmania and South Australia were keener on federation than the other states, as ‘they needed the mother colony more than it needed them’.¹³⁵ Roe suggests that in practical terms, Tasmania’s support for Federation was based on the opportunity to achieve open entry to mainland ports for the island’s exports.¹³⁶

However, idealism was also at play, expressed particularly by Tasmanian federalist politician, Andrew Inglis Clark. Roe observes that Tasmanian nationalism was based on the belief that ‘only when people were members of a

¹³² Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 242. Patriotic sentiment associated with library openings has also been identified in the American context. In his study of American Carnegie Libraries, Theodore Jones finds that ‘patriotism set the tone’ for many of the opening celebrations of these libraries. Jones observes that ‘flags were everywhere’ and ‘patriotic speeches focused on the American “can-do” attitude that made the new public library possible’. This was ‘grass roots patriotism at its best’: T Jones, *Carnegie libraries across America: a public legacy*, Washington, DC, New York, 1997, pp. 84-85.

¹³³ Townsley, *Tasmania*, p. 202.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Hirst, *The sentimental nation*, p. 199.

¹³⁶ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 23.

polity organised on national lines could they develop their full potential as human and social beings'. Roe finds that:

Linked with this concept was hope that Federation would lift political life out of parochial squalor. Such utopianism had a particular edge in Tasmania with its history of convicts and isolation, as well as penury. Federation promised not only something like an equality of wealth with the richer mainland, but also hope of deeper regeneration.¹³⁷

The provision of national newspapers to the public, plus donations of both pro- and anti-Federal pamphlets and books ensured that the Tasmanian Public Library acted as a conduit for the 'imagining of the nation' involved in the production of national sentiment. To consider this as a conscious 'dissemination of patriotic literature' would be to overstate the case. In fact, the secretary of the Hobart branch of the Australian Natives Association, LG Henry, wrote to the editor of the *Mercury* in June 1896 suggesting that the Tasmanian government take active steps to acquire copies of the debates of the Australasian Federal Convention (Sydney 1891) to distribute to Tasmanian libraries, noting that 'the trustees of the Hobart Public Library do not possess in the collection this or any other publication dealing with the federal question'.¹³⁸

Improved accumulation of literature that informed the populace about current issues relating to nationalism and federation was a by-product of the library's successful relationship with its community. Individuals or organisations donated the majority of material relating to Federation and national issues. Trustees minutes recording donations demonstrate increasing public interest in Federation and federal issues. At the meeting May 25, 1897, for example, under the heading 'Federation', the minutes note that 'Mr [JB] Walker laid upon the table a list of some Pamphlets on Federation supplied by Hon. N. Lewis'.¹³⁹ In August of the same year, the library received from the Clerk of the House of Assembly the proceedings of the Australasian Federal Conventions in Sydney (1891) and

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ 'The public libraries and Federation literature', *Mercury*, 10 June 1896, p. 3.

¹³⁹ Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart.

Adelaide (1897), and from private donors ‘Notes on Federal Finance’, a pamphlet on ‘Federation’, and from the Sydney *Daily Telegraph* office a document entitled ‘Federal Finance’. In the following month Government statistician RM Johnston presented copies of two pamphlets authored by himself on ‘Federal Finance and one on the working of the Hare System in Tasmania’, and in 1900 he presented three copies of his pamphlet ‘The Federal Finance Problem’. Johnston was deeply concerned at the financial implications for Tasmania of Federation, considering that the loss of revenue from customs was potentially disastrous.¹⁴⁰ Johnston had been a member of the Minerva club¹⁴¹ with chief librarian Taylor, and like Taylor sustained a deep reservation towards Federation, concerned that the smallness of Tasmania and its financial resources in comparison to the other states would disadvantage it in the proposed Commonwealth.¹⁴²

Taylor, ever politically active and keen to test his autodidactic temperament on new passions, threw himself into nationalist debates. Taylor was a committed nationalist, although opposed to the direction the Federal movement was taking in the colonies.¹⁴³ The antithesis of a professionally impartial librarian, he actively promoted Australia’s independence from Britain as a unified nation. He was a ‘staunch Home Ruler’, consistently and publicly ‘defending the right of Ireland to self-government’, and this belief transferred to his attitude to Australian

¹⁴⁰ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 24. It is significant that Trustees cited ‘losses in revenue consequent on Federation’ in their application to Andrew Carnegie as the principal reason that the Tasmanian State Government was unable itself to provide funding for a new library building: CM Tenison and G Kerr to A Carnegie, 15 August 1902, copy in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁴¹ This intellectual club was active in Hobart in the 1870s. It was formed by Andrew Inglis Clark, who became a key promoter of Federation in Tasmania in the 1890s, as a means of advancing Tasmania’s prosperity. The divergent political attitudes towards the prospect of Federation in intellectuals such as Taylor, Johnston and Clark highlight the complexity of the nationalism for Australians in the period. See H Reynolds, ‘The island colony: Tasmania, society and politics, 1880-1900’, MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1963, pp. 56-63.

¹⁴² By contrast, JB Walker was an ardent federalist and supporter of the notion of the Commonwealth. Walker considered that Johnston, despite his competence and ‘transparent honesty’ was ‘prophesying’ about the financial implications of Federation, which no man could realistically predict, given that it was the ‘inauguration of a new order’: Walker, *Prelude to Federation*, p. 152.

¹⁴³ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 42.

independence.¹⁴⁴ On this theme, he presented a speech *Imperial federation versus Australian independence* in 1889, during a debate in Hobart, and later published the text. In this speech he proposed that:

...the future destiny of the Australasian Colonies was in the direction of Independence, based on the broad lines of Nationality — an Independence that would make them powerful for commerce and peace; powerful for their common welfare; powerful for Righteousness and good works throughout the world.¹⁴⁵

He was anxious to assure listeners that he was not proposing the ‘severance of the natural ties that would always bind [Australians] to the Mother Country’. Cultural affiliations and the ties of shared language were not to be minimised, but Taylor insisted that the ‘only union worth trusting to must ever be the unity that had for its life and soul a true National sentiment’.¹⁴⁶

Taylor was cognisant of the role that the library played in promoting awareness of local and national issues. One of Taylor’s key reforms in his term as librarian was the institution of a popular educative lecture series held in the library. While raising vital funds for book purchases, the lectures offered citizens lectures ranging from phrenology to philosophy. Some of the lectures (but certainly not all) were overtly political, inevitably embracing common themes of nation-building and national identity. In 1910 Albert Edgar Solomon, Attorney-General of Tasmania, delivered a lecture entitled ‘Nation Building’ as part of the winter lecture series, stressing the importance of the ‘unity of national life’ and ‘national ideals’ along social Darwinist lines, nationalism through race kinship, and alluding to the federal government’s White Australia policy.¹⁴⁷ Solomon considered that the ‘characteristics of a nation were a number of men, a fixed territory, unity of national life, and national ideals’, and that Tasmania was destined to ‘become more than a tourist resort’ in its production of great

¹⁴⁴ AJ Taylor, *Forty-five years public librarian, Mr. Alfred J. Taylor: some incidents in his career, a many-sided and useful life*, Hobart, 1919 (n.p.)

¹⁴⁵ AJ Taylor, *Imperial federation versus Australian independence: being notes of a speech delivered at Hobart, 1889*, Hobart, 1889, p. 10.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ ‘Nation building: lecture by the Attorney-General’, *Mercury*, 16 August 1910, p. 6.

Australian citizens ready to defend the nation in war.¹⁴⁸ A few years later, Miller presented a lecture entitled 'The future of our empire'. The fact that the library presented lectures such as those of Solomon and Miller affirms the institution's active participation in what were immediate and pressing concerns for the nation in the period. Given the relative paucity of examples of such overtly political lectures in the library, this activity does not amount to propaganda. Rather, it suggests tolerance for a range of subject matter for lectures within the norms of polite society, demonstrates how the institution was adaptable to social needs and change, neither deeply conservative nor revolutionary.

Taylor took the opportunity brought by the new national library association to travel and associate with other librarians. He participated at all the national conferences. Despite this enthusiasm for professional interaction, however, Taylor chose to direct the Tasmanian library along a path that differed from the other state libraries. He never explicitly embraced the rhetoric of national identity through the active collection of national archives and literature. He also declined to adopt Dewey Classification, despite Armstrong's and Anderson's recommendation of the system to the Tasmanian Public Library in 1903.¹⁴⁹ Taylor's reclassification of the library at this time to his own system did, however, acknowledge some nationalist parameters. Taylor created a scheme for arranging books on the shelves in classes, a scheme that he proudly described to other Australian librarians at the national conference in 1902.¹⁵⁰ With other classes such as 'Theology', 'Science', 'Fiction', 'History', 'Biography', and 'Sociology', Taylor invented a new class, 'Australasia'. In this class Taylor placed 'works dealing solely with Australasia (including the Pacific Islands), of a Geographical, Historical, Biographical or Sociological character'. In this scheme Taylor had created a physical, not merely categorical, distinction between the literature of Australia and its closest neighbours, and that of all other countries of the world.

¹⁴⁸ The lecture was delivered to 'only a very moderate attendance', unlike the normally very popular lectures, which suggests the possibility that Tasmanians had little interest in the subject (or alternatively that it was a typically cold winter evening in Hobart).

¹⁴⁹ See Rayward, 'The early diffusion abroad of the Dewey decimal classification', pp. 162-167.

¹⁵⁰ AJ Taylor, 'The management of small reference libraries', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, p. 18.

Of the thirteen principal areas of classification, the section for Australasia was the only one defined in geographic or socio-political terms.

As Peatling has suggested, the use of such a classification system reinforced the readers' consciousness of the physical and cultural boundaries of their own nation and region. This conception of self and other was presented to readers as a normative national discourse within the wider discourse of order and control that the library sought to present through its book layout.¹⁵¹ That Taylor's classification scheme had great effect on the antipodean readers is beyond doubt. Much space was given over in the local press to descriptions of Taylor's classification, particularly when the library re-opened in its new Carnegie-built premises in 1907. Taylor himself emphasised the apparent transparency of the scheme, a principle of 'orderly arrangement [of the library's] contents in such a way as to render them most readily available to the public'.¹⁵² He wrote:

All Latin and scientific terms have been avoided, and, in place of the technical, and, to some people, unintelligible, nomenclature of the schools, the simplest English words have been used ... the result being that the most uneducated person can find, in a few moments, without the aid of a catalogue, any branch of literature which the library contains. Each case has its distinguishing letter, and below this is placed the subject matter contained in the case.¹⁵³

It is important to note, however, that in library documentation of purchases and donations, such as lists in Annual Reports, the use of the category 'Australia', 'Australasia', or 'Australiana' was inconsistent and irregular, more the exception than the rule.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵¹ Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain', p. 36.

¹⁵² Taylor, 'The management of small reference libraries', p. 15.

¹⁵³ 'The new Public Library', *Mercury*, 21 January 1907, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ This was common in library catalogues and lists of the period. For example, the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library's catalogue (1918) had within 'History' several sub-classes grouped together as 'History of the British Empire'; within these is 'Other British Colonies and Possessions', embracing works on Australia and Tasmania (as well as works on Canada, Gibraltar, New Zealand and South Africa). My thanks to Tony Marshall for bringing this to my attention. Stefan Petrow has found that the Launceston Mechanics Institute, in Launceston, Tasmania, had no designation of Australian collection, and little interest in collecting this material specifically. See S Petrow, *Going to the mechanics: a history of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914*, Launceston, 1998, p. 96.

‘Nationing rhetoric’ in Tasmania

The use of explicit nationing rhetoric, described earlier in the context of mainland libraries and museums, can be identified in Tasmanian institutions decades before the prospect of Federation and the creation of the Australian nation. Taylor and the library trustees were keen to take advantage of the status that came with the description ‘national’ that was increasingly being applied to the principal public reference libraries. As on the mainland, the term ‘national library’ was linked with utility, liberal access to a colony-wide constituency and accessibility, though not (at least until the first decades of the twentieth century) associated with the production of a nationally significant archive or collection.¹⁵⁵ It also related to that sense of regional ‘nationalism’ described by Alan Atkinson, in which pride in the colony was equated with — and described as — national sentiment.

The descriptor ‘national’ was regularly utilised by trustees and the librarian in attempts to promote the Tasmanian Public Library’s status and in bids for increased funding. JB Walker, for example, referred to ‘our National Library’ in 1870 during the period of the library’s financial collapse.¹⁵⁶ After the re-opening the trustees enlisted national rhetoric to promote the library’s new liberal aspirations. In 1872 the trustees applied to government for additional funds on top of the finance supplied by the municipality, on the grounds that the library was much more than a service for the citizens of Hobart Town. The trustees urged the government to recognise that the institution had a much wider significance, ‘partaking as it does of a national rather than a civic character’.¹⁵⁷ The rhetoric of

¹⁵⁵ Levett considers that in the 1850s the claim of ‘national’ for the Tasmanian Public Library reflected a perception of the institution’s ‘role for the Colony as a whole’, despite the fact that in this period its role was ‘essentially a municipal one’: J Levett, ‘The Tasmanian Public Library 1849-1869 the rise and fall of a colonial institution’, MA Thesis, Monash University, 1984, pp. 55-56.

¹⁵⁶ Quoted in J Levett, ‘James Backhouse Walker, the ‘Mope-Hawk’, and the Tasmanian Public Library - a cautionary tale from 1870’, in G Winter (ed.), *Tasmanian insights: essays in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stilwell*, Hobart, 1992, p. 120. In this case Walker was using the term ironically, to stress the lack of governmental support given to the institution that should ideally have had aspirations to be a ‘national library’.

¹⁵⁷ *Tasmanian Public Library Report for the year 1872, 1873*, MCC16/24/1/1, TAHO, Hobart. The use of the term ‘national’ was linked with bids for status and additional funding at the Museum also. JB Walker, for example, discussing the Royal Society’s move in 1885 to transfer the Museum and Botanical Gardens from the Royal Society to an incorporated Board of Trustees, based on a similar move by the Australian Museum in Sydney, considered that ‘There is no doubt

national status was again utilised to advertise the library's reorganisation in 1894-95, which made the library 'more useful to the public' by increasing public access to the collections.¹⁵⁸ Taylor promoted the reorganisation as 'a great increase of the value of the Library to readers' and suggested that the trustees 'can now fairly claim the support of the State to a properly organised National Library'.¹⁵⁹ Similarly, the desire to produce a catalogue to replace the existing 'wretched one, compiled on no fixed plan', also provided an opportunity 'to put our little National Library into respectable order'.¹⁶⁰ The plea for funding for a special room to house the growing collections relating to Tasmania and Australia also stressed patriotic sentiments: trustees urged that '[i]t cannot be too often repeated that the Institution is national in its character, and has a just claim upon Government and the country for more liberal aid'.¹⁶¹

The maturation of the 'national library' vision from a generalised sense of wide public utility, to that of a public archive, emerged clearly at the Tasmanian Public Library around 1907, at the time of the opening of the new Carnegie Library building. Key to Carnegie's stipulations on his grant was that the library should expand its services with a lending facility. Trustees readily concurred with this request, but the stocking of the lending library was problematic. Public expectation was that a large portion of books in the original (reference) library would be transferred to the new lending library, the situation eliciting many letters

it is a wise move; and that, if the Museum and Gardens are nationalised, they will have a better chance of adequate support and endowment, as parliament will then feel that the credit of the Colony is involved in their being adequately endowed and efficiently maintained': Walker, *Prelude to Federation*, p. 26.

¹⁵⁸ Prior to the reorganisation, 5,500 volumes were openly available, with 4,500 in closed access. After the reorganisation, the new 'Book-room' contained 9000 volumes of which 7000 were in the 'public part, in sight and on shelves within easy reach'. The remainder 'some 1700 volumes of illustrated and other books' were in the Librarian's compartment, 'obtainable by readers on application': 'Tasmanian Public Library: Report of Committee on the Recent Alterations, &c.', 2 April 1895, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵⁹ AJ Taylor, Report to Trustees, 1895, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁰ JB Walker to TF Bride, 6 April 1887, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/3, University of Tasmania Library (hereafter UTL), Hobart. The production of a printed catalogue was also a clear way to widely promote the status of a public library. As Wallace Kirsop notes, printed catalogues 'were not just for the use of staff and readers, but opportunities to advertise a library's holdings and achievements to the learned world': W Kirsop, 'Redmond Barry and libraries', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 73, 2004, p. 60.

¹⁶¹ 'The Tasmanian Public Library. By the Librarian', *Mercury*, 27 June 1890, p. 3.

to the local press in 1907. Taylor, however, transferred only 3,000 books from the reference to the lending collection. He was not prepared to sacrifice the quality or primacy of the reference collection, believing this would ‘destroy the “national” character of the institution’ and make it ‘an object of ridicule throughout the Commonwealth’.¹⁶² A similar debate had occurred at the Victoria Public Library, Western Australia, in 1893, when it was declared that ‘no national library in the world, with one exception so far as we know, that of Berlin, lends its books, and the complaints are many that the usefulness of that institution is thereby grievously impaired’.¹⁶³ Armstrong’s paper on the proposed federal library at the 1902 Library Association of Australasia conference reinforced this position when he stated that a ‘national library’ could not legitimately lend out books (unless there were duplicates) as this circumvented its role as a safe central repository.

In the 1870s the possibility of opening a lending branch had been raised but was not approved. Those against the notion considered that the proposal was an attack on liberal library function by the Hobart elite, whose:

...high dignity forbids their commingling in the rooms with others of an inferior grade, and so the cream of the works must be brought to them by their servants. No; this must not be permitted. Once open the floodgate, and so persistent are those that all will be carried before them and the public and national library will become a wreck.¹⁶⁴

Taylor received strong written support from the librarians of the mainland state libraries for his reluctance to dismantle the Reference Library. JRG Adams, principal librarian at the Adelaide Public Library, drew attention to the ephemeral nature of a lending library, stressing that ‘the dignity and permanent utility of the Tasmanian Public Library, as in every National Library, must remain in its reference branch. That branch is what justifies it in claiming to be a national

¹⁶² ‘The Public Library. The rearrangement scheme. What are reference books? Librarian’s reply to critics’, *Mercury*, 1 October 1907, p. 6.

¹⁶³ ‘Vigilans et audax’, *West Australian*, 21 August 1893, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ ‘The Public Library’, *Mercury*, 15 September 1884, p. 3.

library'.¹⁶⁵ The reference collection was to be 'jealously guarded and added to by each generation', until it could reach the 'enormous proportions' seen in libraries in the 'old world'. Such a 'national library' would be a tangible monument to the tenacious growth of new society and also a symbol of its status as a nation.¹⁶⁶

Edmund Morris Miller as progressive nationalist¹⁶⁷

EM Miller initiated a new phase of nationalism at the Tasmanian Public Library when he came to the Tasmanian Public Library in 1915 in the role of trustee.¹⁶⁸ Miller was an ardent nationalist, in culture as well as in politics.¹⁶⁹ He had been an early disciple of federalist politician Alfred Deakin, absorbing Deakin's ideals of civic nationalism and following him through the 'imagining' of the nation that occurred at Federation. In June 1906 Miller became honorary secretary of the newly formed Australian National Party, a 'non-political body organized to develop an Australian sentiment in commerce, industry, science, art and literature', supported by then Prime Minister Deakin.¹⁷⁰ In 1907 he took up the same role for the Imperial Federation League, under the presidency of Deakin, promoting 'the newly recognized imperial policy relating to the Dominions as self-dependent nations within the British Empire'.¹⁷¹ In 1910 he contributed to BR Wise's *Making of the Australian Commonwealth* (1913) on the request of Deakin, his role gathering data from old newspapers for the appendix on 'Struggle in

¹⁶⁵ JRG Adams to AJ Taylor, 26 November 1907, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁶ A Winterson to AJ Taylor, 9 October 1907, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁷ Edmund Morris Miller was known as Morris Miller up until at least 1911, but changed his preferred written name to just Miller some time after this. This thesis refers to him as Miller in most instances, except where contemporary references are quoted.

¹⁶⁸ Miller had no intention of becoming professionally involved with the Public Library of Tasmania, having left the library world in Melbourne to focus on his academic career. However, a major disagreement in the board of trustees over the AJ Taylor's public conduct outside the sphere of his professional duties in 1915 resulted in the resignation of three trustees. Miller was approached to become one of the replacement trustees. Derek Drinkwater considers that it was Miller's 'public lectures in support of the Allied war effort' that impressed the Tasmanian Government which led to his appointment as Public Library Trustee': D Drinkwater, 'E. Morris Miller and Australian librarianship', in P Biskup and MK Rochester (eds.), *Australian library history: papers from the second forum on Australian library history, Canberra, 19-20 July 1985*, Canberra, 1985, p. 108.

¹⁶⁹ See M Roe, *Nine Australian progressives: vitalism in bourgeois social thought, 1890-1960*, St. Lucia, Qld, 1984, esp. Ch. 10.

¹⁷⁰ Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 74.

¹⁷¹ Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 77.

Victoria'.¹⁷² He also acted as Honorary Secretary of the Royal Geographical Society (of Victoria), where he was involved in the promotion of a manuscript entitled 'Historical Sketch of the life of the late Captain Flinders' and the movement to erect a statue to Flinders in Melbourne.¹⁷³



Edmund Morris Miller, 1940.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart, PH30/1/2210)

¹⁷² Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 80.

¹⁷³ Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 81.

During this time Miller worked as a junior librarian at the Melbourne Public Library, and unsuccessfully interviewed for the newly created position of Cataloguer of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library.¹⁷⁴ Miller was a dynamic force at the Melbourne Public Library, often finding himself in conflict with the chief librarian. While Armstrong was conservative in his views of the role of a library in society and its administration, Miller was a progressive in the tradition of American library philosophy, advocating the linking of municipal libraries with the central 'state library' to provide a coherent library network. He proposed the establishment of a board to supervise the development and policies of local libraries, and championing professionalism for librarians.¹⁷⁵ Miller spent a year in England and Europe, during this time visiting many libraries, and prepared a report for Armstrong on the subject of continental libraries in 1908. This report stressed the importance of free lending libraries, and liberal access to the public.¹⁷⁶ Miller saw that the lack of coordination of library services across Australia, amounting at times to interstate rivalry, was a major reason for the poor progress in Australian libraries. Miller placed himself among 'all who are interested in the unfolding of a statesmanlike library policy for the whole of Australia' emulating 'the great democratic institutions which the Australian people have established in the domains of government and education'.¹⁷⁷ In the role of librarian Miller claimed that 'I have ever taken and acted on the view that a librarian should be active in affairs outside his institution in order to increase its influence and standing in the community'.¹⁷⁸

¹⁷⁴ The position went to Kenneth Binns. Miller suggests in his memoir that he might have been successful if Alfred Deakin had still been in office as Prime Minister.

¹⁷⁵ D McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria, 1853-1974', MA Thesis, Monash University, 1975, pp. 84-85, 131. McVilly comments that 'Miller may be considered as the unsuccessful library Trotskyist and Armstrong the successful Stalinist' (p. 85). Leigh Scott, who worked with Miller at the Public Library in Melbourne, noted that Armstrong, though considerate, was not a man who related well to his staff, and that Miller was not the easiest person to get along with: L Edwards, 'Leigh Scott in the formative years of the University of Melbourne Library 1926-1945', in BJ McMullin (ed.), *Instruction and amusement: papers from the Sixth Australian Library History Forum, Monash University, 1 November 1995*, Melbourne, 1996.

¹⁷⁶ D Drinkwater considered that Miller's tour 'provided him with excellent insights into international library practice, the importance of book-trade and library cooperation, and as well the benefits which can be achieved by associations of librarians': Drinkwater, 'E. Morris Miller and Australian librarianship', p. 106.

¹⁷⁷ EM Miller, 'The relation of state and municipal libraries', *Proceedings of the Australian library conference: held at the University of Melbourne, August 1928*, Melbourne, 1928, p. 34.

¹⁷⁸ Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 81.

Frustrated by the conflict and the impossibility of making his career in the Melbourne Public Library, Miller left to join academia and was appointed Lecturer in Mental and Moral Science at the University of Tasmania. Miller's acknowledged expertise was in philosopher Immanuel Kant,¹⁷⁹ though his dominant career interest became child psychology. The fact that Miller was a proponent of 'radically different views about the functions of libraries' that set him apart from his Melbourne Public Library superiors, was to be a significant factor in the progression of the Tasmanian Public Library in the next decades.¹⁸⁰ Miller's influence was to direct its culture from one that was predominantly parochial to one that was assertively national. Miller used his increased influence after his elevation to chief trustee in 1923 actively to promote the library's permanent collection of local and national literature, as well as attempting to improve its general appeal and efficiency for 'modern readers'.¹⁸¹

In one of his earliest progressive crusades, designed to enhance the archival function of the library, Miller enlisted Taylor's aid to push through a legal deposit act for Tasmania. Tasmania was the last Australian state to institute this process, the others having already grasped the importance of establishing legislative means of archiving the literary history of the nation. Copyright and legal deposit have been acknowledged as key mechanisms for the construction of national library collections.¹⁸² Matthew Battles, for example, has observed that the British Library 'grew as a result of its role as copyright registrar which meant that a copy of every book published in Britain had a place in its stacks', and explicitly links the creation of the registrar with rising nationalism.¹⁸³ Battles notes that 'Britain was both drawing inward in its sense of difference from the other nations of Europe

¹⁷⁹ His published works on Kant include *Moral action and natural law in Kant* (1911); *Kant's Doctrine of freedom* (1913); and *Moral law and the highest good, a study of Kant's doctrine of the highest good* (1928).

¹⁸⁰ J Reynolds and M Giordano, *Countries of the mind: the biographical journey of Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964)*, Hobart, 1985, p. 36.

¹⁸¹ E Morris Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 II. Tasmanian Public Library', in *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 1, 1954, p. 14.

¹⁸² In one of the earliest broad studies of national libraries, David C Mearns notes, for example, as 'preservers of the national literature, national libraries were designated as legal depositories and offices of record for the product of the national press': DC Mearns, 'Current trends in national libraries', in Line and Line, *National libraries*, p. 10.

¹⁸³ Battles, *Library: an unquiet history*, p. 122.

and expanding in hopes and power as an empire — and the need to define the national literature was felt more acutely'.¹⁸⁴ In the separate colonies of Australia, legal deposit regulations emerged with the creation of copyright acts in the nineteenth century. In his study of copyright laws and book culture in Australia, Derek Fielding has concluded that copyright law had 'little direct effect on either publishing or reading' in Australia until the 1970s, but the creation of these laws did offer Australian librarians an important avenue for acquiring without cost new local publications.¹⁸⁵ The Melbourne Public Library was the first state library to acquire legal deposit privileges, through the Copyright Act 1869. It was followed by South Australia, which established its Act in 1878, and Western Australia in 1895.¹⁸⁶

New South Wales had established a Copyright Act in 1879, but publishers typically neglected to deposit material. 'Already the literary roll of these colonies embraces some thousands of volumes, and New South Wales being the mother colony of the group, can claim a large proportion of the most valuable books as peculiarly hers', a correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* complained in this context in 1881, 'but the Australasian collection in the Free Public Library (if such can be said to exist) is sadly deficient'.¹⁸⁷ Chief librarian Robert Cooper Walker did not enforce the legal deposit requirements, as he considered that 'all the works of any value whatever, published in the colony, are invariably presented by their writers', (the additions thus appearing in the library statistics as donations).¹⁸⁸ As CW Holgate observed, this meant that 'a certain number of small brochures and ephemeral publications are thus annually lost to Sydney'.¹⁸⁹ It was not until HCL Anderson became Registrar of Copyright in 1896 that

¹⁸⁴ Battles, *Library: an unquiet history*, p. 122.

¹⁸⁵ D Fielding, 'Copyright law changes and Australian book culture', in J Macleod and P Buckridge (eds.), *Books and reading in Australian society*, Nathan, Qld, 1992, p. 110.

¹⁸⁶ J Balnaves and P Biskup, *Australian libraries*, Melbourne, 1966, p. 29. Armstrong and Boys stated that the Libraries Act of 1928 'contains clauses entitling the trustees to receive a copy of every book published in Victoria. Such clauses were for the first time included in the Libraries Act': ELT Armstrong and RD Boys, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1906-1931*, Melbourne, 1932, p. 86.

¹⁸⁷ 'Library copies of Australian publications', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1881, p. 7.

¹⁸⁸ CW Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, London, 1886, p. 34.

¹⁸⁹ Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, p. 34.

acquisitions through this means became more consistent.¹⁹⁰ Edmund la Touche Armstrong expressed little enthusiasm for legal deposit when he observed at the Library Association of Australian conference in 1896 that '[b]ooks and newspapers obtainable under a Copyright Act are always a source of more or less trouble, especially from the smaller publishers'.¹⁹¹

Anderson acknowledged the value of legal deposit in 1902 at the national librarians conference, when he stated that since its inception the Public Library of New South Wales had received some £650 worth of material under the Act, including 'such books, maps, plans, engravings, &c, as have been filed for future use', and not including those accessions of 'only temporary value, such as current newspapers, magazines, and pamphlets that are not preserved'.¹⁹² The monetary value of this collection acquired under copyright, Anderson considered, in terms of appreciation 'amply compensates for the whole depreciation on the books purchased'.¹⁹³ Legal deposit promised systematic acquisition, but rarely delivered fully on that promise. With Federation, the opportunity to acquire via legal deposit at the national level was seized with the passing of the first federal Copyright Act in the Commonwealth Parliament in 1905, although, as Peter Biskup has observed, legal deposit privileges were not realised until 1912 as the act 'inexplicably' failed to grant the library deposit rights.¹⁹⁴ As at the state level, the Act was relatively ineffective due to the fact that copyright deposit was not

¹⁹⁰ Osborn and Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library*, p. 96.

¹⁹¹ ELT Armstrong, 'The librarian and his work', in *Account of the proceedings of the Australasian Library Conference: together with the papers read, list of delegates, etc., and the constitution and office bearers of the Library Association of Australasia*, Melbourne, 1896, p. 28.

¹⁹² HCL Anderson, 'Public libraries and the government subsidy', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting of the Library Association of Australasia held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, p. 7.

¹⁹³ Anderson, 'Public libraries and the government subsidy', p. 7.

¹⁹⁴ Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, p. 25. HCL Anderson had written to Prime Minister Barton on the topic of legal deposit and that future national library, suggesting that Barton would no doubt find it 'necessary to pass a Copyright law by which you will secure for the Federal Library a copy of everything published in Australia'. Anderson observed that it 'might not come into effect for some considerable time, and in the meantime there will be an ugly gap in the literature which has sprung up since the birth of the Commonwealth': HCL Anderson to Edmund Barton, 25 February 1901, quoted in Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, p. 25.

compulsory, and thus only minimal numbers of books were deposited for the Commonwealth library in the early decades.¹⁹⁵

In Tasmania, Miller drove the move to push for legal deposit in 1916.¹⁹⁶ Miller was 'anxious to obtain free copies of all Tasmanian publications',¹⁹⁷ to ensure that the 'Australiana collection could be built upon by legal deposit'.¹⁹⁸ At the meeting at which Legal Deposit was initially discussed, trustee Alderman Bottrill voted against the motion to pursue the action, suggesting that 'an attempt to compel every future author in Tasmania compulsorily to provide a copy of his work for the Library' was 'unjust'. There was also the problem of books 'uninteresting to the public' being placed in a public collection.¹⁹⁹ Bottrill's comments suggest a failure to understand the nature and purpose of a localised archive of a national collection. Miller, by contrast, argued with fluency and prescience for the creation of such an archive in nationalist terms, as described in the *Mercury*:

They were living in a country which was still young, and they wanted to make up for the lapses of the past. There were many souvenirs, reports, and other publications which, though not of much value at the time, would be of considerable value in 50 years time, and it was the business of the Library to make provision for the future by collecting all of these. During the recent Federation campaign there were lots of small pamphlets which were read and then thrown into the wastepaper basket. In 100 years time someone might want to look at the social conditions prevailing at the time of that campaign, and these would then be of value. Under the present conditions they had no authority to obtain these, and if they spent a penny or twopence on each of them they would be open to public criticism.²⁰⁰

After convincing the other trustees (excepting Bottrill, who voted against the

¹⁹⁵ Tony Marshall notes that some of the state-specific copyright legislation (or at least their deposit provisions) appears to have remained in force well into the twentieth century, despite the Commonwealth taking on the responsibility for copyright: T Marshall to the author, 14 May 2007.

¹⁹⁶ 19 December 1916, 'Copyright Act', in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁹⁷ 'Public Library Trustees', *Mercury*, 1 December 1916, p. 6.

¹⁹⁸ AJ Taylor to Government Printer, 31 May 1918, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁹⁹ 'Public Library Trustees', *Mercury*, 1 December 1916, p. 6.

²⁰⁰ Ibid.

motion) of the advantages of the scheme, Miller and Taylor approached the Attorney General to request the introduction of a Bill 'with the object of passing into law a Copyright Act on similar lines to the Legislation in force in Victoria and South Australia'. From this, Miller and Taylor argued, the Tasmanian Public Library would 'derive certain advantages'.²⁰¹ The Act was passed in parliament in February 1918, 'providing for the delivery at the Tasmanian Public Library of copies of books, and other matter published in Tasmania'.²⁰² The significance for the introduction of legal deposit to growing local historical consciousness and national sentiment can be seen in Taylor's comments in 1918, referring to the implementation of the Act. Taylor wrote a letter to the Government Printer urging compliance to legal deposit in which he stressed the importance of the library securing 'a copy of every publication that can in future throw any light upon our history', '[i]n the interests of students, and in order that all matter relating to the State may be preserved'.²⁰³ The intent is crucial, and sheds light upon the increasing awareness from within the library that it had a specific archival role in preserving the community's literary heritage, and thereby promoting historical consciousness.

The Tasmanian Public Library began a new period of regeneration and improvement in 1921. New librarian James Douglas Archer Collier replaced Taylor, who died in that year, and Miller rose to the role of chairman of trustees. The appointment of Collier (a former journalist on the Hobart *Mercury* newspaper) caused a severe rift in the board of trustees and the resignation of

²⁰¹ Annual report for 1916, 27 Feb 1917, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

²⁰² Deposit of Publications Act 8 Geo V no. 29.

²⁰³ AJ Taylor to Government Printer, Tasmania, 31 May 1918. It is interesting how closely Taylor's words echoed that of HCL Anderson, who, when making recommendations to Prime Minister Barton on the future national library, urged purposeful gathering of past historical records, and 'scouring the whole world for books relating to Terra Australis' to gain 'everything that can throw any light on the early history of this continent': HCL Anderson, 'Suggestions on the proper lines for the establishment of, and for securing the necessary material for, a Commonwealth Parliamentary Library', presented to Prime Minister Barton, appendix in Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, p. 50. Again, similar language was used by the Historical Society of Victoria (inaugurated in 1909), which published in May 1912 in the Victorian Historical Magazine a report on official records, which dwelt on the ongoing destruction of official documents and the need for their preservation to 'throw a most interesting light on the early settlement of Victoria': *Victorian Historical Magazine*, May 1912, p. 27, quoted in EW Russell and CL Farrugia, *A matter of record: a history of Public Record Office Victoria*, Melbourne, 2003, p. 26.

trustee LF Giblin. Collier, a ‘young man of the highest character’, was reported by the *Mercury* as having ‘stated quite frankly that he had had no library experience, and would like a fortnight in Sydney to see how library matters were conducted there, before taking up duties in Hobart’.²⁰⁴ The expenses of the other major candidate in the final vote, William Charles Baud of the Melbourne Public Library, were paid to enable him to come to Tasmania for the interview, which made the appointment of Collier even more remarkable. Miller wrote later of the incident:

My opposition to the appointment of Mr. J.D.A. Collier was based entirely on the fact that he was untrained, — inexperienced in library work. The other candidate, W. Baud, who was lately to become Chief Librarian of the Public Library of Victoria, was fully qualified in all respects. And yet when he saw the state of the Library prior to his interview with the Board, he expressed to me his desire to withdraw. To put the Library in order was a task for several men. He was appalled. There was no catalogue, no shelf-list, no proper classification of books. The elementary essentials were all lacking.²⁰⁵

Miller opposition to Collier’s appointment on the grounds of professionalism for librarians reflects the increasing commitment to the improvement in library provision in Australia, and an awareness of growing international professionalism in librarianship in North America and Britain.²⁰⁶ Miller’s doubts about the employment of an applicant with no library training or experience were confirmed twelve years later in the Munn/Pitt survey of conditions in Australian libraries (1934) when the authors noted the ‘fact that the only two state libraries [Tasmania and Queensland] in which trained librarians are not employed are incomparably

²⁰⁴ ‘Public Library’, *Mercury*, 17 January 1922, p. 6. Formal education for librarianship in Australia in the first few decades of the twentieth century consisted of employer-provided in-service education and informal education. The first formal examinations in library economy were offered by the Public Library of New South Wales from 1905, and were regarded as a prerequisite for permanent appointment at the institution. See P Biskup and DM Goodman, *Libraries in Australia*, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 1994, p. 45.

²⁰⁵ E Morris Miller, loose notes, Special and Rare Materials Collection, M.9, UTL, Hobart.

²⁰⁶ See AA Van Slyck, *Free to all: Carnegie libraries & American culture, 1890-1920*, Chicago, 1995 for a description of the new professionalism in librarianship in America; and A Black, *The public library in Britain, 1914-2000*, London, 2000, especially Chapters 1 to 3, for the British context.

the two poorest in the Commonwealth, should convince the authorities of the need of a trained staff'.²⁰⁷

Ultimately, however, Collier and Miller worked together on the shared goal of improving the services of the library.²⁰⁸ Miller described the early stages of the process:

A large cabinet of cards, purporting to be a classed list or catalogue, Mr. Collier and myself agreed to discard as useless. The store-rooms were cluttered with unclassified books and newspapers. The arrangement of the contents of the lending library was workable, but many of the volumes were ragged and worn. What was really important at the time was the arousal of public interest in the library as ancillary to requests for increased grants. The Chairman and the Librarian co-operated in this effort. Mr. Collier improved the appearance of the reference library by the removal of large numbers of drab volumes, and gave the place an air of respectability.²⁰⁹

The library had celebrated its Jubilee Year in 1920, marked by AJ Taylor with a lengthy 'epitome of the history of the Tasmanian Public Library', presented to trustees and published in the local press.²¹⁰ The *World* newspaper gave voice to this relatively optimistic period with a call to the citizens of Hobart to support the institution: 'The growth in the status of the institution and in the increased public interest manifested in it have at last given it some measure of the prestige which is its due', the correspondent observed, 'and it can now be said to have assumed the role of a national library'.²¹¹ The correspondent went on to suggest that '[o]ne of the immediate results of this change of attitude ... is that collectors of books are beginning to realise that the library may be trusted to preserve and make available

²⁰⁷ R Munn and E Pitt, *Australian Libraries, a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, Melbourne, 1935, p. 86.

²⁰⁸ Collier remained in the position of chief librarian until 1954. His dedication and idealism were applauded by LR McColvin, in his 1947 Federal Government report on the state of Australia's libraries. See LR McColvin, *Public libraries in Australia: present conditions and future possibilities: with notes on other library services*, Melbourne, 1947, p. 41.

²⁰⁹ EM Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 II. Tasmanian Public Library', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 1, 1954, pp. 15-16.

²¹⁰ 'The Jubilee Year. Tasmania's Public Library', *World* (Hobart), 17 December 1920, p. 3.

²¹¹ 'Hobart Library. Govt. aid curtailed', *World*, 24 January 1924, p. 3.

for the public use important national collections'.²¹² These sentiments demonstrate the maturing vision of what national aspirations for the Tasmanian Public Library might encompass. From the jingoistic assertions of 'national' status in the last decades of the nineteenth century, which were more hopeful than realistic, the twentieth century brought a more cogent and active acquisition programme for Australian material. It also brought major gifts from philanthropists whose principal aim was to create a library that would, in truth, be able to boast of 'important national collections', as later chapters will describe.

Conclusion

This chapter has explored the effects of Federation nationalism on the major state libraries, particularly the symbiosis of new library professionalism and patriotism. It has identified a shift in attitudes to the cataloguing, acquisition and presentation of material related to the new nation among Australian librarians, and a new perception of the role the public library could play in supporting commercial and social advance in a new nation. Public libraries did consciously participate in the nation-building project, and simultaneously demonstrated a willingness to adapt themselves to society's changing needs, and to ongoing local concerns. That these adaptations were not always universally successful (due to geographical and cultural factors) does not detract from the public library's capacity to be, in Alistair Black's words, a 'very clever institution', able to 'accommodate and negotiate various and sometimes divergent values and beliefs'.²¹³ 'One manifestation of its cleverness', Black considers, is its ability to 'reconfigure itself in the light of social change and social crises'.²¹⁴ This chapter has shown that national sentiment, associated with the changes experienced around Federation, played an important role in the development of the Australian public library in this period, advancing processes of cultural mediation, incorporation, appropriation and adaptation in the institution.

²¹² Ibid.

²¹³ A Black, "'Arsenals of scientific and technical information": public technical libraries in Britain during and immediately after World War I', *Library Trends*, vol. 55, no. 3, 2007, p. 475.

²¹⁴ Ibid.

In making solicited recommendations to the new Commonwealth Government in July 1901 on the future National Library, HCL Anderson suggested that ‘the sentiment of the new nation will probably be turned sympathetically toward a new Library planned on noble lines, and will be shown by rich donations and bequests’.²¹⁵ The following two chapters address the subject of library donations and bequests, focusing on the changing motivations for philanthropic activity related to the ‘sentiment of the new nation’.

²¹⁵ HCL Anderson to Atlee Hunt (Prime Minister Barton’s secretary), 8 July 1901, quoted in Biskup, *Library models and library myths*, pp. 14-15.

CHAPTER 3:

‘No better missionary work’: library philanthropy and cultural change, part 1

Introduction

Chapters 3 and 4 together examine the connection between philanthropy and the will to archive the locality in the public library. While the previous chapters have considered the philosophy and actions of those who managed the libraries (librarians and trustees), Chapters 3 and 4 consider how historical agents *outside* of the public library instigated change in the ethos, attitudes, or social functions of the institution. Library philanthropy manifested in donations of time, finance for new library construction, and gifts of books and whole private libraries. How did these public engagements with the public library change the institution, in its philosophy or its collections? How did the nature or flavour of library philanthropy itself change in the context of developing local and national identities and the evolving role of the institution and its collections? These questions are explored in Chapters 3 and 4, using the Tasmanian Public Library and its philanthropists as the key example. The Tasmanian Public Library is unique in the history of Australian library philanthropy as it was the only state library that benefited from all types of library philanthropy, from small-scale donations, major collection donations from key bibliophiles, *and* major international bricks-and-mortar philanthropy. This combination of philanthropic influences provides a fruitful study for exploring the complex agency which philanthropic action brings to an institution, particularly related to the development of the local and national archive.

Chapter 3 begins by contextualising Australian public library philanthropy with a brief outline of the history of public library philanthropy in Britain and the United States. It considers recent theorising on library philanthropy and introduces ‘cultural struggle’ as a useful way of conceptualising aspects of library philanthropy, particularly in the Australian context. The bulk of the chapter examines the nature and extent of philanthropic activity in the latter part of the nineteenth century related to the Tasmanian Public Library. Elite philanthropy,

book donation, and locally specific donations are discussed. This is followed by an examination of the consequences of the major 'bricks and mortar' philanthropy directed at the institution from the coffers of the Scottish-born American industrialist Andrew Carnegie in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The chapter concludes with an examination of contemporary attitudes to library philanthropy by librarians and managers. Chapter 4 continues the investigation by identifying shifts in the nature of the agency exerted through philanthropy in the new century, focusing on the newly patriotic philanthropic motivations of many library philanthropists at this time. Tasmanian bibliophile and library donor William Walker is examined in detail as a case study.

Philanthropy and library history

Library philanthropy, as a subset of philanthropic study, has received some depth of treatment in the last decade, although in the Australian context the literature remains small.¹ Key international publications include a group of papers published in *Libraries and Culture* in 1996,² and the more recent German/English publication *Philanthropy for libraries* in 2004.³ This recent international library historiography has demonstrated the need to move away from isolated narrative accounts of individual philanthropic acts, and instead attempt an 'evaluation of how public library development fitted into a normative social culture of philanthropy'.⁴ Scholars agree that a study of library philanthropy can help

¹ There has been little research on the history of cultural philanthropy in Australia, apart from case studies such as C Clemente, 'The private face of patronage: the Howitts, artistic and intellectual philanthropists in early Melbourne Society', PhD Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2005. Cultural philanthropy in the context of a specific institution is usefully applied in AS Grimwade and G Vaughan, *Great philanthropists on trial: the art of the bequest*, Carlton, Vic.; Melbourne, 2006, while institution-specific studies in library history, such as B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2007, address philanthropy in specific contexts but do not theorise it. Neither philanthropy nor donations rate an index entry in the major Australian book history compilation dealing with this period, M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001.

² These papers appeared in the Winter and Spring issues of *Libraries & Culture* in 1996, and were republished as DG Davis, *Libraries & philanthropy: proceedings of the Library History Seminar IX, 30 March-1 April, 1995, University of Alabama, Tuscaloosa*, Austin, Tex., 1996.

³ P Vodosek, A Black, and P Hoare (eds.), *Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken (Philanthropy for libraries)*, Wiesbaden, 2004. I am deeply grateful to Alistair Black for not only alerting me to this volume, but also gifting a copy from the other side of the globe.

⁴ R Snape, 'The Harris legacy: philanthropy and the Preston Public Library in the late 19th century', in Vodosek, Black, and Hoare, *Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken*, p. 113.

illuminate social mores of a period,⁵ whilst understanding individual motivation is crucial for assessing the implications and results of philanthropic activity.⁶ Areas for future work in library philanthropy, Peter Hoare suggests, could address the question of how public libraries as ‘purveyors of high culture ... affected the principle of benefaction’ and views on acceptable and unacceptable donations, as well as the donation of fiction in public libraries.⁷ Hoare suggests that central motives for philanthropy were the ‘encouragement of education in the widest sense, and in a moral sense of doing good to one’s neighbours’, and sometimes an opportunity for involvement in the ‘political process’.⁸

A new interest in theoretical investigation of philanthropy has marked the most interesting portion of the recent literature on library philanthropy.⁹ As Robert Snape argues, the study of philanthropy is typically located within theories of hegemony and social control and the structures of a dominant ideology.¹⁰ Such theories suggest that ‘seemingly innocuous or commonsense actions such as founding a public library served to underpin the cultural and ideological

⁵ T Augst, 'Introduction', in T Augst and KE Carpenter (eds.), *Institutions of reading: the social life of libraries in the United States*, Amherst, 2007, p. 4; C Baggs, "'Donations are...earnestly invited": stock donations in the early history of the British public library - acts of philanthropy or shelf clearing?', in Vodosek, Black, and Hoare, *Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken*, p. 153.

⁶ P Hoare, 'Afterword', in Vodosek, Black, and Hoare, *Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken*, p. 295.

⁷ Hoare, 'Afterword', p. 297.

⁸ Hoare, 'Afterword', p. 296.

⁹ Recent literature regarding the study of philanthropy has raised a number of issues with the field. In a recent compilation of essays on philanthropy, *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy*, Robert Payton finds that philanthropic studies as a field is ‘diffuse and tentative’, with no particular disciplinary home: ‘anthropology, philosophy, economics, history, sociology, religion, the history of ideas, and a dozen other fields and subfields are engaged in this common enterprise’: R Payton, 'Introduction', in JB Schneewind (ed.), *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy*, Bloomington, 1996, p. xi. *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy* seeks to apply theory to practice in history of philanthropy, addressing a common perception of the failure in the academic community to develop a united theoretical concept of philanthropy. At a basic level, terminology is confused, and terms ranging from ‘philanthropy’, ‘charity’, ‘benevolence’, ‘giving’, and ‘donating’ tend to be employed with little definition. For a similar discussion of this, see T Adam, 'Introduction', in T Adam (ed.), *Philanthropy, patronage, and civil society: experiences from Germany, Great Britain, and North America*, Bloomington, 2004, p. 4. I have chosen to use the term ‘philanthropy’ in this study, as it is the one most commonly applied in the field of library history, as evidenced by edited compilations such as Vodosek, Black, and Hoare, *Mäzenatentum für Bibliotheken*, and Davis, *Libraries & philanthropy*. Recent work in volumes like *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy*, and *Philanthropy, Patronage, and Civil Society* seeks to redress some of these issues on a transnational basis.

¹⁰ Snape, 'The Harris legacy', p. 117.

infrastructure of society'.¹¹ Such theorisation is useful for understanding major library-founding philanthropy of high-profile donors, such as Andrew Carnegie or John Passmore Edwards. Yet, as a number of studies have shown in different contexts, minor (often anonymous) community donations have had a critical and lasting effect on the development of individual public libraries.¹² This type of philanthropy potentially challenged the cultural coherence of the institution. It acted in some circumstances to contest dominant mores, and to shift (however subtly) patterns of literature provision away from the centre, inflecting it with characteristics that spoke to *local* influences and needs.

Suzanne Stauffer describes this type of evolutionary effect of local philanthropy in her examination of donations at the Ogden Carnegie Library in Utah, USA, which opened in 1903. The new Carnegie building at Ogden stimulated stock donation, but while the board at Ogden promoted the library as a 'cultural and educational institution for "elevating the moral tone of the city", providing for the education of "the common people", and promoting individual self-improvement', donations by members of the community tended to subvert this message.¹³ While many library supporters donated nonfiction and literary materials in accordance with the educational and moral vision of the institution, many of the items donated by individuals were 'more in keeping with a view of the library as a source of books for recreation and entertainment'.¹⁴ Philanthropy at Ogden after Carnegie demonstrates that library benefactors viewed their library as a 'repository of information of all types for community use, not solely of the knowledge and wisdom of the ages', Stauffer argues.¹⁵ In so doing, benefactors helped to create a public library that was a 'microcosm of the larger community', that 'responded to and reflected their actual needs and interests'. As such, Stauffer finds, the public library was 'instrumental in creating and fostering communal identity and culture among the varied social, ethnic, and religious groups' in the

¹¹ Ibid.

¹² Particular examples include Baggs, "'Donations are...earnestly invited'", and SM Stauffer, 'In their own image: the public library collection as a reflection of its donors', *Libraries and the cultural record*, vol. 43, no. 4, 2007, pp. 387-408.

¹³ Stauffer, 'In their own image', p. 403.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ Stauffer, 'In their own image', pp. 403-404.

Ogden community.¹⁶ The need for philanthropy to stock the empty Carnegie building evoked a specific community response that, in the volume of material and promotion of community involvement, explicitly challenged paternalistic public library provision.

In understanding the underlying processes of this type of philanthropy, I find cultural theory emerging from the work of Stuart Hall, and employed most commonly in the field of cultural studies, most helpful. Hall's work theorises cultural struggle as a field 'in which people constantly try to bend what they are given to their own needs and desires, to win a bit of space for themselves, a bit of power over their lives and society's future'.¹⁷ In seeking to understand cultural struggle, understandings are generated concerning institutional change through a dialogue between 'structures' and 'agency'. Hall examines the complexity of this struggle (in social practices, ideologies, culture, and politics) in terms of 'articulation'. Articulation describes the practices by which communities struggle to construct identity out of the given complexities and contradictions of received processes. In this theoretical framework, the colonial public library can be conceived as a 'structure', inherited from the past and lived in the present. It both enables and constrains the 'agency' of the community that is acting upon it through philanthropy.¹⁸ Critical to this dialectic are the both the *nature* and *extent* of the agency involved.¹⁹

Philanthropy in the public library can be seen as one of the key practices of articulation performed by the community upon the institution. It instigates a dialectical play in which the public library influences its community to interact with the institution in certain acceptable ways (supporting hegemonies of appropriate book genres, types, etc.), and the community acts purposively to both

¹⁶ Stauffer, 'In their own image', p. 404.

¹⁷ L Grossberg, 'History, politics and postmodernism: Stuart Hall and cultural studies', in S Hall, K-H Chen and D Morley (eds.), *Stuart Hall: critical dialogues in cultural studies*, London; New York, 1996, p. 154.

¹⁸ Further to these ideas, see J Storey, *Cultural consumption and everyday life*, London, 1999. Storey's work emerges from cultural studies, informed by Antonio Gramsci's theorisation of cultural hegemony and agency.

¹⁹ Storey, *Cultural consumption and everyday life*, p. 159.

complement and contest that projected hegemony, exerting choice and power through donations. Large-scale building philanthropy suggests the embedding of hegemonic values of civic order or enlightenment or self-help (philanthropy from 'above'), while small-scale book philanthropy is an 'everyday' activity of agency, more closely reflecting the needs and aspirations of the local community and its individual members. As a result of these different types of interactions, and the extent to which they operate, the institution of the public library can be changed from without, made more responsive to its community's aspirations and more expressive of its community's complexities. This way of considering philanthropy offers a richer understanding of the ways in which apparently simple acts of donation can have large consequences on the long-term evolution of the public library as an institution.

The international context for Australian library philanthropy

Library philanthropy, from the local to the national and international level, is recognised as an important facet of public library development, a product of the wider climate of philanthropy, and the changing needs of particular libraries and their coeval communities. Philanthropy was central to the expansion of the public library in nineteenth-century Britain, springing from a pervasive culture of philanthropy that touched nearly all aspects of social infrastructure.²⁰ Utilitarianism, which focused in broad terms on 'enlightened self-interest', encouraged benevolent philanthropy. Philanthropy was seen to serve the individual's long-term self-interest as well as maximising the happiness of others.²¹ Utilitarians believed in the importance of state intervention in culture and education. However, if government could not provide adequately for a free library at the local level, private action, or voluntarism, was accepted as appropriate and necessary.²² Thus Utilitarians conceived it an important social duty to assist free public libraries through financial or practical sponsorship. The actions of major benefactors, the most spectacular of whom was Andrew Carnegie, who began

²⁰ Snape, 'The Harris legacy', p. 112.

²¹ A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996, p. 46.

²² Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 72.

‘bankrolling the UK public library movement’ in 1879, were important in changing governmental reluctance to spend ratepayer’s money.²³ Black considers that the early faith in voluntary effort was something ‘later benefactors were to inherit with vigour’.²⁴

Under the influence of Idealist philosophy in the latter part of the nineteenth century, benevolent philanthropy focused less on the amelioration of poverty and short-term distress and instead changed its focus to engineering social change in the longer term. The foundation and ongoing support of institutions such as universities and public libraries was central to this radical mission.²⁵ Idealists supported concepts of citizenship, self-betterment, and educational improvement that were productively synergistic with public library philosophy. In Idealism, self-sacrifice and duty to others was central. Idealists stressed the importance of the ‘charitable motive in the moral life’: philanthropy was placed in the category of the demands of justice and was seen as an expression of citizenship.²⁶ Library promoter Thomas Greenwood perceptively understood that libraries offered the ‘quiet, sober and respectable Londoners’ an avenue to subtly influence the ‘turbulent elements’ in society in a way that would not offend the recipients. He suggested that ‘[f]ree libraries, reading rooms and museums will provide influences of a popular character without having the least taint upon them of being charitable institutions’.²⁷ Major library benefactor John Passmore Edwards, who provided funds for twenty-four libraries in Britain and was second only to Andrew Carnegie as a public library donor in that country, was of the same ilk. His Utilitarianism combined this with strong humanitarian and emotional concerns, and a desire to promote greater social stability and harmony.

The difference between ‘bricks and mortar’ philanthropy of the major benefactors,

²³ C Baggs, 'Review of Alistair Black, 'A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914', H-LIS, H-Net Reviews, March, 1999, p. 4.

²⁴ Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 72.

²⁵ Snape, 'The Harris legacy', p. 112.

²⁶ A Ryan, 'The philanthropic perspective after a hundred years', in Schneewind, *Giving: Western ideas of philanthropy*, p. 84.

²⁷ T Greenwood, *Free public libraries: their organisation, uses, and management*, London, 1887, (2nd edition), p. 178.

and smaller scale stock philanthropy was frequently contiguous with the divide between national (or corporate) philanthropy and local philanthropy. Philanthropy emerging from the library's close community most often consisted of stock donation. This particular form of 'bottom-up' philanthropy exerted a powerful force, as Chris Baggs has demonstrated in his recent study of stock donations in the early history of the British public library.²⁸ The fact that public donations formed the basis of many public library collections formed in the nineteenth century has been associated with the legislature that established the free public system in the 1850s. Significantly, the Public Libraries Act 1850 made no provision for the purchase of stock from the local rate monies levied. Although this was amended within five years, allowing public libraries to purchase their own stock, the practice of public donation continued unabated.²⁹ While James Duff Brown estimated in 1907 that some 15 per cent of books in British public libraries had been donated, Baggs has found that the figure is likely to be closer to 40 per cent.³⁰ The relative poverty of most public libraries ensured that this reliance on donations, and the active soliciting of public philanthropy by library management continued into the twentieth century.

With the many social, political, financial and philosophical influences, individual motivation for public library philanthropy in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries has been suggested to be 'so varied as to defy general conclusions'.³¹ In his study of British library philanthropy in the late nineteenth century, Robert Snape found that some library philanthropists were interested in the promotion of a cultural ideal, specifically 'provision of access to cultural production and values', while others were motivated by the 'guiding light of utility'.³² Some philanthropists gave from a traditional religious duty to look after the 'deserving poor', or gave to libraries out of civic patriotism. Others still indulged in library philanthropy for 'a sense of personal satisfaction, self-congratulation, even self-perpetuation', in what was termed 'reflex benefit' at the

²⁸ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', pp. 143-53.

²⁹ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', p. 144.

³⁰ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', pp. 145-46.

³¹ Snape, 'The Harris legacy', p. 115.

³² Snape, 'The Harris legacy', pp. 115-16.

time.³³ Motivation was also contingent on the type and size of the philanthropy, ranging from the grand gesture of building benefaction, through the donation of a major private book collection, to the small scale donation of book stock.

A similar history of small-scale donations is apparent in North America, although the influence of major benefactors, particularly Andrew Carnegie, came earlier than in Britain. Carnegie's philanthropy had a dramatic impact on the expansion of free public libraries in North America. In his formative years in Scotland, Carnegie absorbed the dominant philosophy that the free public library had a profound moral purpose as an instrument of raising public morals and aspirations for education and financial prosperity. After making his fortune in the American steel industry, he applied this to his American and British library philanthropy, in the process shifting from a 'paternalistic' relationship between donor and recipient, to a new 'corporate' practice of philanthropy from 1899.³⁴ In the 'corporate' model the philanthropist took a back seat, managing a foundation to work on his behalf to distribute funds to organisations. The number of libraries built with Carnegie funding increased after Carnegie corporatised his philanthropic activities, and applications were also opened to any community bodies seeking library-building funds in the English-speaking world. Carnegie died in 1919 after providing funds for some 2,500 buildings with some US \$50,000,000.³⁵

Opportunity to show civic responsibility through library philanthropy was appealing to many wealthy citizens of the United States of America. Carnegie was only the most prominent among many library philanthropists, including George Peabody, Walter L Newberry, and Charles Bowers Winn. The philanthropic impulse was complimentary to the values central to the American ethos, including self-help and the capacity of the individual to forge his own path. Library philanthropy represented 'a form of largesse that was untainted by the hint of a

³³ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', p. 152. Baggs notes that the term 'reflex benefit' was used by the Cardiff Public Library in 1903.

³⁴ For an analysis of this change, see A Van Slyck, *Free to all: Carnegie libraries & American culture, 1890-1920*, Chicago, 1995.

³⁵ MH Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, Metuchen, NJ, 1995, p. 246.

direct charitable dole', and it also held the potential to help educate a more productive workforce.³⁶ Library philanthropy appealed not only to those motivated by values of moral enlightenment, but also to those in the Progressive Movement who embraced the institution as a 'proper icon' for their aims.³⁷

At the local level, Carnegie philanthropy has been closely linked with the promotion of small-scale book donation. Carnegie did not provide funds for book purchasing with his grants, insisting that local funding bodies taxed residents at an appropriate rate to fund running costs and book purchases. Social motivation was a central feature of Carnegie's 'self-help' ideology. Carnegie's evident approval of the public library as a means to improve the lives and morals of the community provided an opening for citizens of all classes to channel this type of philanthropic activity. As library historian George Bobinski observed, Carnegie 'dramatized the value of libraries', through the millions he gave in their support.³⁸ Phyllis Dain has identified a clear link between Carnegie funding and an increase in local philanthropy in America, finding that 'Carnegie grants did ... encourage what might be viewed as grass-roots library efforts as well as stimulating gifts from other persons'.³⁹ She writes that '[w]hile some librarians feared that reliance on tax support would discourage gifts and others worried that gifts might diminish tax support, public libraries continued to receive and solicit private donations'.⁴⁰ Local library philanthropy was integrally connected to the spread of public libraries funded through building grants from Andrew Carnegie. The great number of Carnegie libraries erected throughout America in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century ensured that stock donation by local benefactors would be entrenched in local attitudes to library provision.

³⁶ FJ Stielow and J Corsaro, 'The Carnegie question and the Public Library Movement in progressive era New York', in RS Martin (ed.), *Carnegie denied: communities rejecting Carnegie Library construction grants, 1898-1925*, Westport, Ct., 1993, p. 38.

³⁷ Stielow and Corsaro, 'The Carnegie question and the Public Library Movement', p. 48.

³⁸ GS Bobinski, *Carnegie libraries; their history and impact on American public library development*, Chicago, 1969, pp. 191-92.

³⁹ P Dain, 'American public libraries and the Third Sector: historical reflections and implications', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1996, p. 66.

⁴⁰ Dain, 'American public libraries and the Third Sector', p. 67.

Attitudes to philanthropy by librarians and managers

In the British public library, frequent appeals to the public for donations in libraries' annual reports, reprinted in local papers, were commonplace, 'sometimes written year after year to the same, formulaic pattern', as Chris Baggs has observed.⁴¹ Calls for more bricks-and-mortar philanthropy were also common. 'What gift can confer more universal good than a public library or a museum! Oh that the philanthropy of the rich would flow out more in this direction', Thomas Greenwood opined in his *Free public libraries*, first published in 1886.⁴² But beneath the official rhetoric, what did the librarians really think about donations?

Chris Baggs has argued that historically British librarians and library administrators have disliked dependence on stock donations, despite the common economic necessity of this practice, feeling it deprived them of the ability to control library stock and opened the library to 'crank' donations and poor quality literature.⁴³ British librarians tended to be negative within the profession about the quality and type of material that was donated.⁴⁴ Edward Edwards and James Duff Brown were generally scathing. Brown wrote in his *Manual of library economy* that the 'usual donations thought suitable for public libraries' were 'piles of unbound and ragged periodicals, old guide-books, calf-bound theology of the 18th century, prayer books, and useless lumber of the same sort ... in untold quantities'.⁴⁵ Dependence on donations deprived librarians of the ability to control library stock. Preference was for donations of money: these gave the opportunity for librarians to build a balanced and useful collection by systematic purchase from prepared lists.⁴⁶ Librarians recognised certain types of local donation that challenged normative literature as the incursion of radical elements, while fiction donation disturbed the moral principles and utilitarian outlook of the institution.⁴⁷ Local philanthropy in the form of book donation could thus be construed as

⁴¹ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', p.150.

⁴² Greenwood, *Free public libraries*, p. 148.

⁴³ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', pp. 143-53.

⁴⁴ See Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited'.

⁴⁵ J Duff Brown, *Manual of library economy*, 1st edition, London, 1903, p. 221.

⁴⁶ T Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain, 1845-1975*, London, 1977, p. 75.

⁴⁷ See Black, *A new history of the English public library*, esp. Ch. 9, 'Librarians: their social engagement and controlling discourse', pp. 193-224.

simultaneously threatening and necessary to the library profession. In fact, Chris Baggs suggests, Edwards, Brown and others were probably exaggerating the negative aspects of the practice of stock donation,⁴⁸ their attitudes reflecting a lack of appreciation of voluntarism, and inadequate political and financial realism.⁴⁹

This attitude to small-scale local donations as necessary, though troublesome, can also be found in professional forums of Australian librarians in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. HCL Anderson spoke on aspects of donation and philanthropy at each of the national conferences, from 1896 to 1902. Anderson, of all the prominent Australian librarians of the period, had the most practical expertise in the area, given his fruitful nurturing of the philanthropist David Scott Mitchell that resulted in the bequest of the Mitchell collection to the Public Library of New South Wales. Edmund la Touche Armstrong also spoke on minor book donations in 'The librarian and his work' at the first conference of the Library Association of Australasia. Armstrong observed disapprovingly that '[i]n the case of donations to a library all rubbish should be, though it rarely is, refused'.⁵⁰ 'Rubbish' in this context meant not only books in poor condition, but also literature not deemed suitable for a public library, particularly fiction. Censorship of inappropriate donations was also condoned as a part of the library profession's contribution to the apparatus of surveillance in a rigidly moral culture: as Deana Heath has argued, Australia had some of the most severe censorship laws of any democratic country between 1901 and the Second World War.⁵¹

⁴⁸ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', pp. 149-50.

⁴⁹ GK Peatling, 'Discipline and the discipline: histories of the British public library', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2003, pp. 121-48.

⁵⁰ HCL Anderson, 'The librarian and his work', in *Account of the proceedings of the Australasian Library Conference: together with the papers read, list of delegates, etc., and the constitution and office bearers of the Library Association of Australasia*, Melbourne, 1896, p. 28.

⁵¹ D Heath, 'Literary censorship, imperialism and the white Australia policy', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 69. Brian Hubber has found that typically Australian librarians 'actively suppressed literary and political works in accordance with the socially dominant view' and that the national library association also directly condoned covert censorship: B Hubber, '"Literary pest-germs": a study of censorship in colonial Australia', in BW Rayward (ed.), *Australian library history in context: papers for the third Forum on Australian Library History, University of New South Wales, July 17 and 18, 1987*, Sydney, 1988, p. 109.

As I will describe in greater detail in Chapter 4, Australian library professionals were, conversely, keen to attract large-scale collection donations to their institutions and to cultivate major philanthropy. This was seen as a civic duty concomitant with public library provision that had been too readily ignored in the colonies. At the 1902 Library Association of Australasia conference, HCL Anderson spoke on 'Public libraries and the Government subsidy' noting that 'American experience must convince us that nothing attracts so much civic generosity as the local library and the handsomer the building and the more dignified the scope of the work attempted, the more magnificent the donations and bequests from wealthy citizens'.⁵² No Andrew Carnegie figure emerged in Australia, however, and large-scale library philanthropy — and indeed cultural philanthropy in general — was uncommon. Few cultural institutions were established philanthropically, and the majority of public museums and certainly libraries in nineteenth-century Australia were public institutions, funded and supported by colonial governments.⁵³ Certainly, despite a few high profile examples such as Dr Morgan Thomas' rich bequest of money to the Adelaide Public Library and Museum in 1901,⁵⁴ individual citizens of the elite classes did not support cultural and educational institutions in the nineteenth century with the degree of philanthropy that can be observed in the international context.

⁵² HCL Anderson, 'Public libraries and the government subsidy', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting of the Library Association of Australasia held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, pp. 14-15.

⁵³ C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge, UK; Melbourne, 1997, p. 84. Private museums in Tasmania in the nineteenth century, such as those run by JW Beattie and librarian AJ Taylor, tended to be displays of curios that did not outlast the demise of their founders. These collections typically found their way to the state or city museums in Hobart and Launceston. See Peter Mercer, 'Museums', *The companion to Tasmanian History* (online), http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/M/Museums.htm, accessed 15 July 2009.

⁵⁴ See C Bridge, *A trunk full of books: history of the State Library of South Australia and its forerunners*, Netley, S. Aust., 1986. Thomas owned few books, and had no interest in the fine arts or natural history. The *Australian dictionary of biography online edition* suggests that 'the most plausible explanation for his choice of his residuary legatee is that he incorrectly believed that the Adelaide Circulating Library was conducted by the board of the Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery', as he frequented that subscription library: EJR Morgan, 'Thomas, Morgan (1824 - 1903)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060282b.htm>, accessed 1 September 2009.

Social philanthropy in Tasmania

As in the other Australian colonies, philanthropy for cultural institutions in Tasmania (either bricks-and-mortar donations, or donations of collections) was negligible in comparison to social philanthropy for the poor and needy.⁵⁵ This was a reflection of significant social problems. Historian Lloyd Robson has described Tasmania in the mid- to late nineteenth century as a colony that ‘cried out for philanthropy’.⁵⁶ The penal origins of the settlement in particular affected both the nature and extent of social philanthropic activity into the early twentieth century. The ‘liberation of Tasmania’⁵⁷ was achieved in 1852 with the cessation of Transportation. However, the legacy of convictism was a community with a large proportion of citizens unable to survive or thrive independent of state or private philanthropic support. Catholic Bishop of Hobart Town, RW Willson, observed in the 1860s that Tasmania had to maintain ‘a much larger number of destitute persons, in proportion to its size than any other of the Australian colonies’.⁵⁸ This situation was not a hidden blight, but was rather, in Willson’s words, ‘patent to everyone’.⁵⁹ Liberal and missionary motivation inspired by a virgin society operated alongside bruised pride, a corollary to Tasmania’s inauspicious beginnings.⁶⁰

Tasmanian social and cultural philanthropy emerged from this syncretism. Philanthropy was seen as a vital weapon in the colony’s struggle to distance itself from the Transportation era, yet attitudes to Tasmania’s penal history had a

⁵⁵ One of the few examples of building philanthropy can be found in the construction of the Hobart Working Men’s Club. Its first building was largely built from a donation by prominent local liberal William Guesdon: S Petrow, ‘Leisure for the Toilers: The Hobart Working Men’s Club 1864-1887’, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2002, p. 76.

⁵⁶ LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania*, Melbourne, 1983, p. 68. For a summary of philanthropy in Tasmania, see Alison Alexander, ‘Philanthropy’, in *The companion to Tasmanian History* (online), http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion_to_tasmanian_history/P/Philanthropy.htm.

⁵⁷ J West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. I, 1852, (facsimile edition Adelaide, 1966), p. 303.

⁵⁸ Quoted in JC Brown, *Poverty is not a crime: the development of social services in Tasmania, 1803-1900*, Hobart, 1972, p. 74.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ Michael Roe, in his study of the development of ‘moral enlightenment’ in colonial Australia, argues that moral enlightenment pervaded the colonies so deeply because it offered a common ground for various ideologies, encouraging ‘missionary zeal’ in the context of the newly established society: M Roe, *Quest for authority in eastern Australia, 1835-1851*, Parkville, Vic., 1965. Roe confirms that many of the ‘culturists’ who were involved with institutions such as Mechanics’ Institutes were also active philanthropists (p. 158).

distinct effect on the direction and quantity of philanthropic action. Free colonists held views on social philanthropy that mixed their English background with local prejudices and ‘the ideal of what a colonist should be like’.⁶¹ In this view poverty was the result of character defects, and charitable aid only encouraged vice and perpetuated poverty. It was difficult to constitute convicts as the ‘virtuous poor’. In her study of social services in Tasmania in the nineteenth century, Joan Brown has found that, partly as a result of these widely-held conceptions, voluntary agencies played a relatively subordinate role until the 1890s. The financial burden of supporting the poor and needy (many of whom were ex-convicts or their children) fell largely to the colonial government.⁶²

Nevertheless, from the 1850s the colony was increasingly populated with what Peter Bolger has described as a ‘highly sophisticated community of middle-class expatriates, whose most characteristic attitude to life was that of the evangelical liberal’.⁶³ This core of dedicated philanthropists, ‘motivated by a strong sense of Christian duty ... and a firm belief in the value of voluntary effort’,⁶⁴ and heavily influenced by British attitudes and ideologies of ‘good works’, set up and ran a number of key charities. These included the Hobart Temperance Alliance (established 1856), St Joseph’s Orphanage (established 1847), and Hobart City Mission (established 1852).⁶⁵ The longstanding moral conflict experienced by would-be philanthropists between their Christian principles, and the notion that poverty was invariably self-caused, was ameliorated by the passage of time. The contingent of ex-convicts requiring social services gradually become smaller as the penal era came to a close, and a new generation of Tasmanians grew up whose ideas ‘were not determined by the generally accepted [negative] view of the ex-convict’.⁶⁶

⁶¹ Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 74.

⁶² Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 170.

⁶³ PF Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Canberra, 1973, p. 99.

⁶⁴ Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 87.

⁶⁵ Philanthropic societies existed in Tasmania from as early as 1829, although most of these early societies, like the Benevolent and Strangers’ Friend Society in Hobart, failed. See Alison Alexander, ‘Philanthropy’.

⁶⁶ Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 152.

The deep depression experienced in Tasmania after the crash of the Tasmanian banks in the early 1890s once again put pressure on philanthropic institutions and philanthropically inclined individuals. 'There is no doubt that things are very bad here, and we have a number of unemployed ... everyone is pinching, and for some the pinching is very severe', James Backhouse Walker wrote to James Bonwick at this time.⁶⁷ The depression of the 1890s had a direct impact on the prosperity of public services. Townsley notes that a 'parsimonious' attitude prevailed in government towards services such as hospitals, schools and benevolent societies, leading to 'public squalor'.⁶⁸ In this environment, voluntary social philanthropy once again come to the fore, and citizens' aid, in time and money, was even more crucial to the continuation of services largely maintained by the government.

Increasing national sentiment, encouraging a philosophy of 'the right of all Australians to equality of opportunity and to a good life', was also a key factor in the increase of voluntarism and private philanthropic activity in Tasmania in the 1890s.⁶⁹ After Federation, the welfare state took a greater role in social amelioration, but private philanthropy still played a significant role, as an expression of the citizens' duty to the state.⁷⁰ As Townsley observes, by the twentieth century, Tasmanian citizens were 'pleased to respect and continue a great tradition' established by the many hard-pressed charitable organisations of the nineteenth century.⁷¹

⁶⁷ JB Walker to James Bonwick, 16 June 1894, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C2/4, p. 207, University of Tasmania Library (hereafter UTL), Hobart.

⁶⁸ WA Townsley, *Tasmania: from colony to statehood 1803-1945*, Hobart, 1991, p. 218.

⁶⁹ Brown, *Poverty is not a crime*, p. 152. Henry Reynolds identifies the liberals in Tasmania as being key to this new interest in ameliorating social conditions from the 1880s: H Reynolds, 'The island colony: Tasmania, society and politics, 1880-1900', MA Thesis, University of Tasmania, 1963, p. 70; Townsley, *Tasmania: from colony to statehood 1803-1945*, p. 406.

⁷⁰ For a discussion of women's roles in philanthropy, see S Swain, 'Women and philanthropy in colonial and post-colonial Australia', in KD McCarthy (ed.), *Women, philanthropy, and civil society*, Bloomington, 2001, pp. 153-68. Swain suggests that, unlike on mainland Australia, women in Tasmania took a lesser role in philanthropic activity and donation of their time to charitable causes, possibly because of the lingering disinclination for women to be involved in assisting convicts and ex-convicts.

⁷¹ Townsley, *Tasmania: from colony to statehood 1803-1945*, p. 402.

Books, elevating culture and the development of library philanthropy

Where philanthropy *was* directed to cultural ends in Tasmania, particularly to libraries, in what ways did the peculiarities of the colony affect its character? The anonymous prose and verse pamphlet *Hobartia. A sketch*, published in Hobart in 1840 by anti-transportationist William Gore Elliston, epitomises the complex blend of sentiments and aspirations in penal Van Diemen's Land.⁷² It gives a useful early insight into Tasmanian motivations for cultural philanthropy. The pamphlet 'on the glories and beauties of Hobart' was written in defense of Tasmania's reputation against 'the breath of slander' that had branded it 'with lowest degradation'. In the late 1830s a damning report on prison discipline in Tasmania had been submitted to the Colonial Office by Alexander Maconochie, private secretary to Lieutenant-Governor Sir John Franklin, and used by the Molesworth committee investigating Transportation.⁷³ The report, which was published in the English press, was heavily critical of penal conditions and processes. It described a colony in which 'slavery tainted colonial life: the colonists were harsh and overbearing at home; they were quarrelsome neighbours, given to reckless assertion; rapacious, envious and disaffected'.⁷⁴ In the system, Maconochie considered, the 'bad were little punished, the good demoralised; self respect was destroyed; and men born to better things, sacrificed by political institutions, rather than by their personal depravity or their crimes'.⁷⁵

The bad press raised a 'fearful storm' in Tasmania, 'whose respectable inhabitants were furious at the daring suggestion that they were on a par with slave-drivers and sadists living in moral anarchy'.⁷⁶ In its defence of the moral standing of Tasmania's free settlers, *Hobartia. A sketch* drew attention to those institutions that 'tend to intellectual and moral good', specifically the 'book societies and clubs', churches and horticultural societies. These institutions daily proved their

⁷² Anon., *Hobartia. A sketch*, 1840.

⁷³ See LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania vol. I: Van Diemen's Land from the earliest times to 1855*, Melbourne, 1983, pp. 323-26.

⁷⁴ West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, (facsimile edition Adelaide, 1966), p. 266.

⁷⁵ Ibid.

⁷⁶ Robson, *A history of Tasmania*, vol. I, p. 323.

‘intellectual and moral worth’, and Tasmanians’ ‘zeal for education’.⁷⁷ The Mechanics’ Institute library was singled out for praise. The resident reader and the visitor to Hobart were advised that if ‘literature’s gems attract thy mind, then to the library go, and on the table spread behold the literary tribute of the world, or scan the journals of Hobartia’s teeming press’.⁷⁸ In highlighting these institutions of enlightenment, the pamphlet called upon the philanthropic impulse of those Tasmanians — both the ordinary and the powerful — who would see their colony raised in the world’s estimation: ‘Oh ye philanthropists, who devise fair schemes to mend man’s moral state, ye legislators, who with anxious minds muse o’er the moral wilderness’.⁷⁹

Similar sentiments were expressed by prominent Tasmanian artist Benjamin Duterrau, when over two evenings in June and August 1847 he took the platform at the Hobart Mechanics’ Institute to present lectures ‘On Harmony and the harmonious results of well-spent time, showing how effectually the Mechanics’ Institute tends to that end’.⁸⁰ Duterrau was a respected member of the local intelligentsia with acknowledged expertise in local affairs as well as European high culture.⁸¹ Duterrau addressed a ‘very respectable audience’ at the Mechanics’ Institute, speaking in the June lecture ‘at considerable length on the history of progress and refinement’, and in August on the great necessity for ‘elevation by rationality’.⁸² These were critical issues in a colony where, Duterrau considered, the ‘scourge of transportation had in measure deprived society of the harmony and

⁷⁷ *Hobartia. A sketch*, pp. 14, 15.

⁷⁸ *Hobartia. A sketch*, p. 6.

⁷⁹ *Hobartia. A sketch*, pp. 6, 16-17.

⁸⁰ ‘Mechanics’ Institute’, *Courier* (Hobart), 2 June 1847, p. 2. Duterrau presented a number of lectures at the Mechanics’ Institute, most on the theme of the importance of fine arts to the proper development of the colony: A Rand, ‘Duterrau, Benjamin (1767-1851)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A010324b.htm?hilite=duterrau>, accessed 12 June 2009.

⁸¹ Duterrau’s most famous painting, *The conciliation* (1840), was a self-styled ‘National Picture’ in which Duterrau sought to ‘form a moral lesson for the present and succeeding generations’ concerning the relationship between indigenes and Britons in the colonies: *Hobart Town Courier*, 23 June, 1837, quoted in T Bonyhady, *Australian colonial paintings in the Australian National Gallery*, Canberra, 1986, p. 85. In his mid 19th century history of Tasmania, John West considered that this painting would become ‘an interesting memorial, in another age, of the most honourable passage in Tasmanian history’: J West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 62.

⁸² ‘Mechanics’ Institute’, *Courier* (Hobart), 2 June 1847, p. 2.

happiness so closely interwoven with the social state of a civilized community'.⁸³ The solution, he considered, was effective deployment of 'liberal associations' such as the Mechanics' Institute, which offered 'rational enjoyment' through 'the books in the library'.⁸⁴ Such rational enjoyment served not only to 'dissipate illiberal prejudice', but also to 'warm the heart with the ardent spirit of philanthropy'. Duterrau concluded that, although the Government was to be commended for its financial assistance, 'the public should not hold themselves exonerated from all interference for [the Institute's] welfare'.⁸⁵

Both Duterrau and the anonymous author of *Hobartia. A sketch* articulated key aspects of cultural philanthropy in the penal colony. The promotion of moral virtue and the institutions that supported it was crucial to the self-esteem and reputation of the colony. Books and libraries were one of the principal routes to moral and intellectual elevation; moral and intellectual elevation was the path upon which the emancipist and the free-settler alike could rise to the status of the true citizens of the colony and by extension, the Empire. Crucially, in the delivery of these goals, the state alone was inadequate. Philanthropists must fill the breach. Thomas Adam argues that in the British public library context, philanthropy in this period was always conceived in relation to the state, providing necessary social and cultural services that philanthropists considered were not adequately provided by the state (for political or economic reasons), or which were provided by the state but not seen to be operating at a satisfactory level.⁸⁶ In Tasmania, it is evident that Duterrau and the author of *Hobartia. A sketch* similarly identified the essential symbiosis between the state and philanthropists in the betterment of cultural institutions such as libraries.

Institutions such as the Mechanics' Institute, and later the Tasmanian Public Library, were mobilised as markers of social progress in the colony, their 'civic yield' measured by statistics and numerical data such as quantities of visitors, and

⁸³ 'Mechanics' Institute', *Courier*, 1 September, 1847, p. 4

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Ibid.

⁸⁶ See Adam, 'Introduction', esp. p. 4; also Snape, 'The Harris legacy: philanthropy and the Preston Public Library in the late 19th century', pp. 112-13.

numbers of books accessed from different departments. In 1849, two years after Duterrau gave his lectures, the Mechanics' Institute annual report was able to proudly refer to the library as 'being obviously of paramount importance', despite holding only 1,500 volumes. The committee was 'convinced that moral culture' was the 'prominent object' of the patrons, judging from 'the nature and number of Books issued from the library, and the attendance of members in the Reading-Room'.⁸⁷ The tenet that the provision of appropriate literature was a key to enlightenment prompted the committee to encourage further book donations, 'as are calculated to keep alive the spirit daily manifested for advancement in scientific and moral attainments'.⁸⁸ Books, morals, universal enlightenment and philanthropy coalesced in colonial libraries from their inception, made urgent by the 'newness' of a virgin society and its intrinsic and complex social problems.

Elite philanthropy

Duterrau's plea for philanthropic support for the Mechanics' Institute, and that of the anonymous author of *Hobartia. A sketch*, emerged from a perception of unfulfilled need, and abundant missionary zeal. Where cultural philanthropy occurred, it typically emerged in the middle and upper classes as a commitment of personal time to forwarding the progress of institutions that were seen to promote particular moral or social values in the community, or through small to medium scale donations of stock. In the late nineteenth century Hobart boasted a large number of societies and associations motivated towards the scientific or literary advance or mutual improvement, in proportion to its small population.⁸⁹ For cultural philanthropists, commitments of time, financial largesse, and stock support for the libraries of the Royal Society and the Hobart Working Men's Club was a logical extension of patronage and usage of these associations.⁹⁰ As trustees

⁸⁷ *Report of the Hobart Town Mechanics' Institute for 1848*, Hobart Town, 1849, p. 5.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Petrow, 'Leisure for the toilers', p. 87.

⁹⁰ See Petrow, 'Leisure for the toilers'. At the Tasmanian Royal Society, for example, the majority of the books and journals listed in the first catalogue of the library were acquired by donation, many by society members. See M Baker and P Hughes, *Collection: Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery*, Hobart, Tas., 2007, p. 3; and E Geddes, 'Tasmanian Libraries II. The library of the Royal Society of Tasmania', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 4, no. 11, 1956, p. 46. Other similar societies were also major donors to the book collections, especially with materials such as annual reports, papers and proceedings.

on institutional boards, elites could actively influence library practice and philosophy, typically to promote the established values of the institution. An example of such an elite was William Robert Giblin, premier and judge, and co-founder of the Hobart Working Men's Club. Giblin was praised after his death for his use of his time for his community: 'he was ever willing to spare his leisure time to foster or promote any attempt to improve the happiness or the morals of the community, to succour the distressed, or to place on a surer footing those who had stumbled in life's career or were in danger of doing so'.⁹¹ Giblin was also an active donor to the institution, providing 'valuable presentations' to the Tasmanian Public Library in the years prior to its re-opening in 1870.⁹²

James Backhouse Walker was one of the most prominent of philanthropically motivated Tasmanians who expended energy on social amelioration, and tied this closely with cultural improvement and moral enlightenment. George Clarke wrote in 1902 that Walker had been 'very sympathetic with all movements for the uplifting of our social and moral condition, though sufficiently alive to the futility of many well-meant but ill-considered schemes of doing good'.⁹³ His unusually passionate commitment to the development of the Tasmanian Public Library in his role as trustee suggests that he considered this institution as one of the more creditworthy 'schemes of doing good'.⁹⁴ Walker took a 'steady interest' in the library, and in a period of depression and institutional impecuniness he 'frequently urged reforms'. In his diary he wrote of the 'pains' he took to manipulate the composition of the board of trustees, to ensure a more dynamic and progressive program (the municipal members of the board typically gave it 'little attention').⁹⁵

⁹¹ 'The late Mr. Justice Giblin', *Brisbane Courier* (Queensland), 19 January 1887, p. 6.

⁹² S Hannaford, *Catalogue of books in the Tasmanian Public Library, Hobart Town, 1870*, Hobart, 1871.

⁹³ G Clarke, 'Biographical sketch: James Backhouse Walker, F.R.G.S.', in *Early Tasmania: papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899*, Hobart, 1902, p. vi.

⁹⁴ As well as his work with the Royal Society, his trusteeship of the Tasmanian Museum and Botanical Gardens and his trusteeship of the Tasmanian Public Library, Walker played a central role in the founding of the University of Tasmania and the Hobart Working Men's Club. The Hobart Working Men's Club was formed 'to steer society away from the convict past and towards a new, more inclusive society', in practice weaning working men away from the pub and giving them the opportunity for self-improvement: Petrow, 'Leisure for the toilers', p. 74.

⁹⁵ JB Walker and PB Walker, *Prelude to Federation (1884-1898): extracts from the journal of James Backhouse Walker*, Hobart, 1978, pp. 73, 120, 123.

Walker's philanthropy was a donation of time rather than wealth or books. His own very significant private collection, consisting of Tasmanian books, pamphlets, newspapers and manuscripts, was left in his will to his sisters, and the only donation to the Tasmanian Public Library consisted of a bound copy of his own printed pamphlets on Tasmanian history. He recommended that his sisters offer parts of his 'Colonial collection' to the Tasmanian Public Library at a 'moderate price', though he directed that the Tasmanian portion of the collection to be offered as a gift to either the University of Tasmania library or the Historical Section of the Royal Society.⁹⁶

Trustees could directly influence the book stock of the library by recommendation, through activity on the book committee, or other means. The Tasmanian Public Library established a system in which trustees and patrons could make written suggestions for future book acquisitions.⁹⁷ By the late 1890s a printed form to this end was published, allowing members of the public to submit recommendations. Headed '[t]he purchase of the undermentioned Works for the Tasmanian Public Library is recommended', with columns for the book's title, author, publisher, number of volumes, price, and remarks, the form was designed to be presented to the trustees, for ultimate approval by the librarian Alfred Taylor.⁹⁸ In 1899 James Backhouse Walker appears to have hijacked the system,

⁹⁶ Walker, James Backhouse (1898) *Summary of the Will of James Backhouse Walker, Hobart, Tasmania, 1898*, Special and Rare Materials Collection, UTL, Tasmania; <http://eprints.utas.edu.au/6183/>, accessed 1 July 2009. Walker was a passionate collector of Australiana and was reputed to have one of the finest collections in Tasmania at the time of his death. Walker directed the majority of his book philanthropy to founding the library of the fledgling University of Tasmania in 1896: DH Borchardt, 'The University of Tasmania Library 1889-1959', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1960, pp. 164-65. He evidently did not consider it his job to remedy the 'disgraceful deficiency' in 'works relating to Tasmania' in the Public Library that he had complained about in the forum of the Royal Society in 1899: *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, for the years 1898-1899*, Hobart, 1900, p. xxv. In his history of the Tasmanian Public Library AE Browning called it a 'strange mischance' that Walker's collection was not presented to the Tasmanian Public Library: AE Browning, 'History of the State Library of Tasmania', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1959, p. 86.

⁹⁷ Book purchasing had been largely in the hands of librarian AJ Taylor up until the reorganisation of the library in 1896. These measures recognise the desire of the book committee and other trustees to open up the book selection process.

⁹⁸ Complaints about the method of book selection were frequent throughout the history of the Tasmanian Public Library, but this was not a phenomenon unique to Tasmania or the colonies. Thomas Kelly notes, for example, that systematic purchasing was a luxury available to very few British libraries in the nineteenth century: Kelly, *A history of public libraries in Great Britain*, p. 76.

objecting to librarian Taylor's poor performance in book selection, crossing out Taylor's name and inserting his own at the top of the page. Walker placed 'remarks' beside many of the recommendations based on personal experience, ('a remarkable book'), or secondary commentary ('favourably reviewed in "Spectator"; "I've never read anything that equals it in its deep sea wonder & mystery": Kipling').⁹⁹ Other wealthy and well-educated donors, such as Justin McCarty Browne, also offered their own compiled lists of recommendations.¹⁰⁰

Public stock donations

Public donations for the re-opened Tasmanian Public Library were encouraged from the outset. The 1871 catalogue contained a plea (common in public library publications of the period) for further beneficence to the institution, following on the generosity of former donors. The catalogue was specific in the advice offered on the forms that a bequest could take. 'Any Person desirous to leave a Donation of Legacy in favour of the Institution' was encouraged to remember the library in their Will, and the following proforma was offered as an example:

I hereby give and bequeath unto the Trustees for the time being of the Tasmanian Public Library all and singular my Books (or Charts, Coins, Engravings, Etchings, Lithographs, Manuscripts, Maps, Medals, Objects of Natural History, Pamphlets, Paintings, Photographs, Statuettes, &c., as the case may be), the same to be placed in the Public Library, and to be there kept by the said Trustees, for the use of the Public, subject to the general Regulations of the Institution.¹⁰¹

⁹⁹ 'Lists of books and periodicals donated and ordered by the State Library, and of books given away', SLT42, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

¹⁰⁰ See evidence of this in 'Lists of books and periodicals donated and ordered by the State Library, and of books given away', SLT42, TAHO, Hobart. Browne also recommended and facilitated the purchase by the library of copies of the "Yeoman" and the 'Australasian', the property of the Tasmanian Club, and offered to complete any missing numbers from these periodicals from his own collection: Minutes of meeting 2 June 1871, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1870 - 29 January 1895, AA827/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰¹ Hannaford, *Catalogue of books in the Tasmanian Public Library, Hobart Town, 1870*, p. 7. This donation list reflects as much a museological imagination as a strictly literary impetus, and suggests some openness (or ambivalence) on the part of the trustees as to the nature of the institution. This broad approach to prospective collection donations reflects the contemporary situation in British public libraries. In her study of heritage practices and attitudes in the British public library, Penelope Jenkinson notes that a large proportion of donations included non-document material (fossils, artefacts, etc). Such artefactual donations, Jenkinson argues, reflected the 'contemporary public perception of the close relationship between the role of library and museum': P Jenkinson, 'Heritage and the public library: the influence and interpretation of heritage

The first librarian of the free Tasmanian Public Library, Samuel Hannaford, was praised for his efforts to enrich the library collections. His obituary noted that 'many a valuable volume occupies a place on the shelves that but for his assiduity in procuring donations of books would not have been added to the catalogue'.¹⁰² While Hannaford's efforts were not inconsiderable, it is certain that library philanthropy thrived within the context of 'reflex benefit'. The 'reflex benefit' of major donations was substantial. For example, the generosity of named individual donors to the library prior to its re-opening as a free institution was highlighted in the opening speeches in 1870, with particular praise given to earlier donors including Lady Jane Franklin, Sir William Denison (lieutenant-governor of Tasmania from 1847 to 1854),¹⁰³ and James Ebenezer Bicheno.¹⁰⁴ Even smaller donations provided the donor with a measure of reflex benefit, as they were noted individually in the minutes of library trustees' meetings, which were then published in full in the daily press. In the first years of the reopened library, the numbers of presentations greatly outnumbered purchased volumes, which suggests a significant input from the community into the makeup of the collections.¹⁰⁵ In its first year of opening the library increased its book collection by 242 volumes, 82 of which were purchased, 160 presented by public bodies and private individuals.

What can the type of material donated to the library tell us about attitudes to the library collections present in the community? The vast majority of the material

in the English public library from 1850 to the present', PhD Thesis, Leeds Metropolitan University, 1999, p. 233. Despite the variety of donations that was encouraged, the Tasmanian Public Library continued as a collection of print and manuscript material until the mid 20th century. The Justin McCarty Browne collection included coins and other non-paper materials, but the fate of this portion of the acquisition is uncertain. The Tasmanian Public Library (then the State Library of Tasmania) received a major bequest from Henry Allport in 1965 that included a portion of decorative arts (furniture, china, silver and glass).

¹⁰² Hannaford obituary, *Argus* (Melbourne), 9 January 1874, p. 5.

¹⁰³ Denison had a large personal library, focused on natural history and current literature: CH Currey, 'Denison, Sir William Thomas (1804-1871)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A040048b.htm?hilite=denison>, accessed 1 July 2009.

¹⁰⁴ 'Inauguration of the Tasmanian Public Library', 5 September 1870, AA827/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰⁵ CW Holgate was of the opinion that donations 'from corporate bodies or individuals' to the Tasmanian Public Library in the 1870s-80s were 'not numerous', but the statistics do not support his view. See CW Holgate, *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania*, London, 1886, p. 29.

donated reflected the prevailing standards of public library book collections. Donated books enhanced the holdings across all fields, from science to literary classics. Donations reflected the types of books that emigrants brought to Australia from the northern hemisphere, and the types of publications available on the local markets, the great majority of which were imported from Britain. The quantity of locally specific material, relating to the history, geography or contemporary activity of the colony was small. However, the proportion of locally specific material in relation to other types of material was significantly higher in *donations* to the collection by the public than in *purchases* by library management.

This trend increased in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This important factor alerts us to a degree of negotiation of the character of library stock that was occurring through the activity of library philanthropy in this period. While motivations for donations were certainly varied, the type of philanthropy that privileged the local in the decades from 1870 to 1900 can be read as an expression of the emerging pride in the colony, which itself was a product of a perception of the growing chasm between the convict past and the present and the concentration of an 'attachment to place'. The increased privileging of the local that occurred through public donations operated concurrently with the increasing interest in local history that emerged at this time, as Chapter 1 has shown. In some cases a perception of the paucity of locally specific material in the public library encouraged certain donors actively to seek to remedy the perceived gap in the collections that was a product of the passive acquisition of local material by library management.

This sort of privileging of place as a central motivation for public library philanthropy is well documented in the context of British public library development.¹⁰⁶ As Peter Hoare has observed, one key motivation for

¹⁰⁶ A number of studies have explored the importance of philanthropy to the development of locally specific collections in the British public library. These include Jenkinson, 'Heritage and the public library'; and D Dixon, 'Civic pride and posterity', *The Local Studies Librarian*, vol. 15, no. 1, 1996, pp. 6-10.

philanthropy in the British public library was a 'sense of belonging' to a particular community.¹⁰⁷ While British librarians were professionally encouraged to promote these collections in their libraries, it was frequently through philanthropy that the local collections were enhanced. Local donations were of significant and lasting importance to the development of the individual public library, and 'any item, whether good, bad or indifferent, was invaluable'.¹⁰⁸ Focusing on the City of Leicester Library, Diana Dixon describes how city, borough and county libraries acquired local materials largely through philanthropists who ranged from the professional classes, local and national politicians, to nonconformists who espoused the temperance cause. Regular appeals for donations that enriched the archive of the locality resulted in gifts from local businessmen and civic dignitaries as well as former residents and exiles. At the Leicester Library, the acknowledged excellence of the local collection was due not to munificence from the Corporation of Leicester, Dixon finds, but to the civic pride of many of its citizens who wished to preserve the county's heritage for posterity.¹⁰⁹

Similarly, older studies of individual free public libraries, such as those at Liverpool and Cambridge, confirm the centrality of philanthropy to the formation of local collections, emphasising an intellectual and emotional connection to the area and its history in which the library was located.¹¹⁰ This was particularly the case where a key major collection donation inspired follow-up smaller scale donations. At Liverpool, for example, it was noted that the great collection relating to the 'history of the County of Lancaster and more especially of the town of Liverpool' donated by Thomas Binns acted as a 'sort of magnetic centre drawing to itself during the past fifty years everything in the way of books and documents which could be acquired calculated to illustrate the County Palatine'.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁷ Hoare, 'Afterword', p. 296.

¹⁰⁸ Baggs, 'Donations are...earnestly invited', p. 150.

¹⁰⁹ See Dixon, 'Civic pride and posterity'.

¹¹⁰ J Pink, *'After Fifty Years': a retrospect of the Public Free Library, Cambridge, 1855-1905*, Cambridge, 1905; and P Cowell, *Liverpool public libraries: a history of fifty years*, Liverpool, 1903, are both examples of studies which demonstrate the significance of local donations to collection development, and pride in the local library.

¹¹¹ Cowell, *Liverpool public libraries*, pp. 49, 123, 47.

As I have discussed in Chapter 1, little interest in promoting the locality was shown by librarians and trustees until late in the nineteenth century, either at the Tasmanian Public Library or the other mainland public libraries. However, throughout the history of the Tasmanian Public Library from the 1840s onwards, philanthropists have offered individual items or major collections that had this focus. Justin McCarty Browne, for example, was a major donor to the library for the 1870 re-opening, and his donations at this time focused on Tasmaniana and Australiana.¹¹² Other specifically Tasmanian material donated for the re-opening of the library included *Guide for excursionists from the mainland to Tasmania* (1869) by Henry Thomas, presented by WH Fletcher. Walch and Sons donated their own *Walch's Tasmanian almanac* for 1870. Tasmanian Attorney-General William Robert Giblin, first on the donation list for the re-opened library, gave 'Piles of Tasmanian Journals'.¹¹³ Some of the local content came as donations from authors who provided their local library with copies of their own publications. Prominent Tasmanian author Louisa Meredith (wife of Charles Meredith, colonial politician and minister of the Crown) donated six of her own volumes in 1871, including *A Tasmanian memory of 1834: in five scenes* (1869), *Phoebe's mother* (1869), *Loved, and lost!* (1860), *Over the straits: a visit to Victoria* (1861), and *My home in Tasmania* (1852). Her donations helped to cement her public standing and signalled her support for the institution. James Bonwick did the same, donating thirteen of his books in May 1908 including *Curious facts of old colonial days* (1870), *Our nationalities* (1880), and *Romance of the wool trade* (1894).¹¹⁴ Even librarian Samuel Hannaford donated five of his own publications.¹¹⁵

¹¹² Brown gave copies of *Two voyages to New South Wales and Van Diemen's Land* (1822) by Thomas Reid, *Colonization of Australia* (1836) by RR Torrens, and *The rise, progress, and present state of Van Diemen's [i.e. Diemen's] Land* (1833) by Henry Walter Parker, and in 1871 the *Hobart Town Monthly Magazine* (1833).

¹¹³ 'Presentations to the Tasmanian Public Library from July 1870', SLT42, TAHO, Hobart.

¹¹⁴ Bonwick made similar donations of his publications to other Australian state libraries, such as the Public Library in Adelaide in 1902, where his presentation of ten of his volumes on Australian history elicited a warm response from library officials, who considered that 'all lovers of Australian history would be greatly indebted to the donor for his generosity': 'New books for the Public Library', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 18 October 1902, p. 8.

¹¹⁵ These included including *The wild flowers of Tasmania: or, chatty rambles afloat and ashore, amidst the seaweeds, ferns, and flowering plants* (1866); and *Sea and river-side rambles in Victoria: being a handbook for those seeking recreation during the summer months* (1860).

As noted above, the proportion of locally focused or derived materials in donations increased as the century progressed. A similar phenomenon was occurring at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, albeit on a larger scale. A significant engagement with the locality (ranging from natural to social history of Tasmania and Australia) underpinned exhibition philosophy at the museum, under the effective management of curator Alexander Morton between 1884 and 1907. As Joanne Huxley has shown, this had a direct effect on museum philanthropy.¹¹⁶ Significantly there was a flourishing of small-scale stock donations at the museum in this period, which Huxley links with patriotic sentiment stimulated by an explicit exhibition philosophy. With little encouragement from public library officials for locally specific donations, the effect was not as marked at the Tasmanian Public Library, but public donations to the library collections that reflected local concerns and pride *did* increase in the same period. As the next chapter will show, this effect became much more prominent in the twentieth century, due to an emerging public recognition of the 'patriotic' value of philanthropy in the context of post-Federation nationalism.

Carnegie philanthropy and institutional change

The Tasmanian Public Library applied for, and received funding from Andrew Carnegie for a new building in 1902. The library was the first and largest of only four Australian public libraries (and the only state library) to receive a Carnegie grant.¹¹⁷ The Tasmanian Public Library was the second library in the southern

¹¹⁶ JK Huxley, 'Courtier to the powerful and zealous curator for the people: the contribution of Alexander Morton to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, 1884-1907', *Kanunnah*, vol. 2, 2008, pp. 1-34.

¹¹⁷ The others were all small local libraries on the mainland: two in Victoria, and one at Midland Junction, 19 kilometres east of Perth, Western Australia. The Victorian Carnegie libraries were at Northcote, then a suburb on the fringes of the city of Melbourne, and Mildura, a country town 550 km northwest of Melbourne. At Mildura, funding was unsuccessfully requested in 1902 and the grant finally awarded after another application in 1906. See N Horrocks, 'The Carnegie Corporation of New York and its impact on library development in Australia: a case-study of foundation influence', PhD Thesis, University of Pittsburgh, 1971. John Metcalfe questioned Carnegie's lack of funding to Australian libraries, writing: 'The question may be asked, "where was Andrew Carnegie?", and it was asked... What Carnegie gave and did not give has not been clearly understood, and in Australia there was a kind of Carnegie cargo cult, to the effect that only evil spirits were preventing rich uncle Andrew's entirely free libraries from being landed and distributed all over the country'. See J Metcalfe, 'Library development in Australia: a case study of development in a colonial and continental country', in LR McColvin and RF Vollans (eds.), *Libraries for the people: international studies in librarianship in honour of Lionel R. McColvin*,

hemisphere to receive a Carnegie gift, after Dunedin in New Zealand,¹¹⁸ and received its grant at the numerical apex of Carnegie building grant awards, which declined after 1903 in America and Europe.¹¹⁹

By 1897 it was widely known that Carnegie was offering funds for library buildings, and ‘applications for benefactions poured in from all over the world’.¹²⁰ The Book Committee of the Tasmanian Public Library, formed at the time of the mid-1890s restructure, took the action to apply to Andrew Carnegie. The visit to the library by the ‘Reverend Whitelaw, a Scotch divine’, in 1901, encouraged this course of action.¹²¹ Carnegie’s philosophy of library benefaction, well known to those applying because of the large amount of press his many library grants had received, seemed to be ideal for Tasmanian conditions. Carnegie had been reported in 1900 as saying that he chose free libraries as:

...the best agencies for improving the masses of the people, because they give nothing for nothing. They only help those who help themselves. They never pauperize. They reach the aspiring, and open to these the chief treasures of the world — those stored up on books. A taste for reading drives out lower tastes.¹²²

London, 1968, p. 136. There has been little written on the four Carnegie Libraries that were built in Australia, although there are a number of articles that deal with the opportunities provided to the library profession through funding from the Carnegie Corporation after 1920. See Maxine Rochester, ‘Wise philanthropy: the Carnegie Corporation and libraries of the British Commonwealth in the 1920s and 1930s’, in papers of the 68th IFLA Council and General Conference, 2002. For Carnegie grants in New Zealand, see JE Traue, ‘Sordid duplicity or cross-cultural misunderstanding?: the fate of Andrew Carnegie’s gifts for free public libraries in New Zealand’, *Library History*, vol. 16, no. 1, 2000, pp. 13-34.

¹¹⁸ Browning, ‘History of the State Library of Tasmania’, p. 87.

¹¹⁹ In 1899 Carnegie promised funds to 26 cities in America, more than twice the total number funded by Carnegie in the previous thirteen years. Funding peaked in 1903 with 204 libraries funds offered. Carnegie building grants ended in 1917 after a damning report by Alvin Johnson: Van Slyck, *Free to all*, p. 217. For a revealing study of Carnegie philanthropy and ongoing local philanthropy in context of a particular region, see PM Valentine, ‘Steel, cotton, and tobacco: philanthropy and public libraries in North Carolina, 1900-1940’, *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 31, no. 2, 1996, pp. 280-85. Valentine considers Carnegie philanthropy acted as a ‘focusing device which helped bring the resources of a community together’ (p. 285).

¹²⁰ RS Martin, *Carnegie denied: communities rejecting Carnegie Library construction grants, 1898-1925*, Westport, Ct., 1993, p. viii.

¹²¹ Browning, ‘History of the State Library of Tasmania’, p. 86. It was common for library committees to become aware of Carnegie grants in haphazard ways. Grimes notes that in Ireland, ‘Carnegie did not formally advertise his scheme but simply entertained enquiries from properly constituted local bodies who cared to write to him. These local communities became aware of Carnegie’s generosity through reports in newspapers and periodicals’: B Grimes, *Irish Carnegie libraries: a catalogue and architectural history*, Dublin, 1998, p. 25.

¹²² Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, pp. 246-47.

This philosophy cohered well with the history of Tasmanian philanthropic sentiment. For a colony in which pauperism had spectral connections with penal history, the promise of a philanthropy directed to the aspiring was immediately appealing, as was the opportunity to enhance public morals. The prospect of better access to the literature of the world was also appealing for an institution at the proverbial end of it. As the government had turned down repeated requests for improved financial allocations and a new building, the Carnegie grant seemed the best opportunity to build on the mission already established at the library for elevation and self-help.

After a 'careful discussion' of the desirability of the application, the committee drafted a letter to Andrew Carnegie requesting financial assistance.¹²³ They then brought the matter before the trustees, who accepted the committee's suggestion. Alfred Taylor carried out the negotiations with Carnegie.¹²⁴ On 20 December 1902 an Act to provide for the endowment and management of the Tasmanian Public Library was made by the Tasmanian Government, stipulating that a suitable site be provided free of cost by the Hobart Municipal Council, and that the income at the disposal of the trustees for the maintenance thereof be not less than £575 per annum. Eight trustees were appointed, four representing the government, and four the city council. The Carnegie bequest did not cover all the building costs. Trustees were obliged to draw upon their own revenue for £560 to complete and equip the new buildings, funds that would otherwise have gone towards the purchase of new books.¹²⁵ In March 1903, Carnegie and the Hobart City Council signed the agreement, and planning began for the new library, which according to Carnegie's stipulations would feature both a reference and a new free lending branch.¹²⁶

¹²³ CM Tenison to Trustees of Tasmanian Public Library, 12 January 1902, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart.

¹²⁴ 'The Carnegie Library', *Mercury* (Hobart), 5 July 1907, p. 6.

¹²⁵ AJ Taylor to Andrew Carnegie, 8 September 1908, in Librarian's letterbook, SLT3/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹²⁶ Horrocks, 'The Carnegie Corporation of New York', p. 387. The conditions stipulated a guaranteed annual income of not less than £575, a site to be provided by the Council, and the creation of a free lending department.

In preparation for the changes, Taylor undertook a study tour of public libraries in England, France, Italy, and Ireland where he gave his 'particular attention to the Public Libraries having free circulating branches' in 1905.¹²⁷ He was particularly taken with England's municipal library system, and with the internationally renowned librarian James Duff Brown.¹²⁸ After visiting certain 'up-to-date Institutions' he wrote to trustees that he had 'learned much that will be useful regarding such matters as the best furniture to provide, and the most efficient and economical methods of arranging the Libraries and Reading Rooms'.¹²⁹ Taylor's new enthusiasm for 'modern library ideas, principally those promoted by English [lending] libraries'¹³⁰ had a strong effect on his attitude to the 'archival' function of the Tasmanian Public Library, directly leading to the disposal of the Tasmanian book *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, as will be discussed in Chapter 5.

Carnegie philanthropy was not always greeted with public approbation, as some communities, or elements therein, took issue with Carnegie's 'ill-gotten gains'.¹³¹ In America there was considerable criticism of Carnegie's library philanthropy, regarding the morality of his financial success and his 'purchase of fame with his library monuments', widespread in all levels of public opinion.¹³² Criticism also was levelled at his refusal to donate money to stock and run the libraries he built. Robert Snape suggests this attitude often emerged from a 'traditional working-class suspicion of philanthropy'.¹³³ Tasmanians were generally sympathetic to the

¹²⁷ Taylor, 'Librarians visit to London Report October 1 1905', in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart.

¹²⁸ According to LS Jast, James Duff Brown's 'reputation and influence extended far beyond his own country. Foreign librarians visiting London almost invariably made for two places [including] a small room in Clerkenwell ... where Mr J.D. Brown worked in his official capacity as Librarian': LS Jast, *Libraries and living: essays and addresses of a public librarian*, 1932, p. 74.

¹²⁹ Taylor, 'Librarians visit to London Report October 1, 1905'.

¹³⁰ AJ Taylor, *Forty-five years public librarian, Mr. Alfred J. Taylor: some incidents in his career, a many-sided and useful life*, Hobart, 1919, (n.p.).

¹³¹ A Lemon, *The Northcote side of the river*, North Melbourne, 1983, p. 159.

¹³² See Bobinski, *Carnegie libraries*, p. 105.

¹³³ Snape, 'The Harris legacy', p. 116. The initial application to Andrew Carnegie for building funding for the Northcote Library in the state of Victoria was made by local newspaper owner RJ Whalley, two years after what Andrew Lemon describes as a 'facetious' suggestion had been made in Council to apply for Carnegie funds: Lemon, *The Northcote side of the river*, p. 159. The Melbourne Age decried the application as 'whining mendicancy'. In Mildura when the foundation stone was laid for the new Carnegie-funded library in 1907, the Lieutenant-Governor of Victoria Sir John Madden made reference to controversy around Carnegie's 'ill-gotten' gains, spent in 'an

receipt of the Carnegie grant, and the benefits of philanthropy to the library and the community.¹³⁴ Criticism that did appear in the press complained of a lack of motivation in the local community: Hobart citizen B Horton complained, for example, of how Hobart was ‘a place in which the people are much less heavily rated than many of the smaller English towns, and who yet think it an honour to receive part of the Carnegie millions’. These funds, Horton continued ‘appear to have been won out of the bone and sinew of his fellow-men’, while Carnegie’s interest in Tasmanian affairs ‘perhaps amounts to the purchase of a case of our apples for use at Skibo Castle!’¹³⁵ Annual reports and other library documents reveal only appreciation for Carnegie’s generosity and the improvements to the library. Taylor was obsequious in his response to the funding, writing a personal letter to Carnegie in 1908 that concluded with a description of a ‘young lady who had been a very regular attendant at the Library in her leisure hours’ who ‘fell a victim to Typhoid’. The girl’s mother sent Taylor her notebook after the girl’s death, in which the last entry apparently read ‘God bless Carnegie for his Free Libraries’.¹³⁶

The new double storey Carnegie library building was built in Hobart on the corner of Davey and Argyle Streets. Architects Walker and Salier were chosen to design the new building, which they designed to be in keeping with the existing Town Hall ‘without being a slavish copy’.¹³⁷ Sir AE Havelock, the Governor of Tasmania, laid the foundation stone on 22 February 1904. The library was opened by the Tasmanian Governor, Sir Gerald Strickland, on 11 February 1907, ‘attended by a representative gathering from all classes of the community ... [indicating] that interest in the institution is not confined to one class only’.¹³⁸ The

inappropriate way’, but dismissed these concerns in light of the benefits to be gained through the funding for Mildura’s citizens, many of whom were Scottish (as was Carnegie) or of Scottish descent: ‘Vice-regal visit to Mildura’, *Mildura Cultivator*, 16 October 1907, p. 349.

¹³⁴ This is typical of the receipt of Carnegie building grants in the American context. Jones notes that ‘[m]ost communities neither praised nor criticised Carnegie’ and indeed ‘most communities were thankful for the gift’: T Jones, *Carnegie libraries across America: a public legacy*, New York, 1997, p. 86.

¹³⁵ ‘Advertising Tasmania’, *Mercury*, 4 November 1904, p. 5.

¹³⁶ AJ Taylor to A Carnegie, 8 September 1908, in Librarian’s letterbook, SLT3/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹³⁷ ‘Tasmanian Centenary celebrations’, *Mercury*, 23 February 1904, p. 6.

¹³⁸ ‘Tasmanian Public Library Opening Ceremony’, *Mercury*, 12 February 1907, p. 5.

opening was captured by a photograph of the crowded reading room, apparently taken from high in the rafters. The faces of the seated guests caught in the long exposure are solemn and dignified, seemingly cognisant of history being made. Around the crowd, the photograph shows well-stocked bookcases eight shelves high, carrying the book collection transferred from the Town Hall, with additional books, numbering in total around 14,500 volumes.¹³⁹

After the opening of the lending library a few months later on 5 July 1907, a photographer was sent around the whole building, making the first (and only) set of photographs taken in the Carnegie library.¹⁴⁰ The group of images celebrate an institution enjoying a peak of ‘usefulness’ and dignity. The photographer composed shots in the lending library (on the first floor next to the reference reading room), with some patrons seated reading at a table, another standing at the loan counter being attended by the librarian, tall shelves filled with serried volumes, some 5,500 available for loan. Most of these books were donated by the public.¹⁴¹ The lending library was more modestly appointed than the reference library, shelves being re-used from the old Town Hall quarters, and serviceable linoleum on the floor instead of cork.¹⁴² The photographer set up more shots in the reference reading room, now clear of the rows of chairs and instead equipped with four large tables and hoop backed chairs, a fifth table laid out with papers as if a meeting had just concluded. In the photograph readers are carefully posed, standing and sitting, and AJ Taylor stands authoritatively near the centre of the room, gazing straight into the camera. Downstairs, further shots were taken of the newspaper room, with Taylor again standing sentinel near the large arched windows. This group of photographs recorded the library at its best: well stocked, highly patronised and actively supervised.

¹³⁹ Ibid.

¹⁴⁰ The public was able to borrow books from 8 July 1907.

¹⁴¹ The lending collection comprised at the opening History 434 volumes, Biography 712, Geography 315, Fiction 1,300, Magazines 1,000, Philosophy and Mental Science 100, General Science 335, Sociology 184, General Literature 330, Poetry and Drama 336, Useful Arts 66, Useful and Fine Arts 84, Fine Arts and Games 76, Theology 250: ‘The Carnegie Library’, *Mercury*, 5 July 1907, p. 6.

¹⁴² ‘The New Public Library’, *Mercury*, 21 January 1907, p. 5.



The exterior of the Carnegie building, Tasmanian Public Library, Hobart, c.1907.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart 30-494)



The opening ceremony of the new Carnegie library building, 1907.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart SLT23-24-2388-1)



The Reference Room of the new Carnegie library, Tasmanian Public Library, c. 1907.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart SLT23-24-2388-2)



The Lending Library of the new Carnegie Library, Tasmanian Public Library, c. 1907.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart SLT NS1013-185)



The ground floor reading room, Carnegie library, Tasmanian Public Library, c. 1907.
(Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, Hobart SLT23-24-2388-3)

In the months following the re-opening, public use of the library and its fledgling lending service rose. At the end of the financial year in which the new library was built, the institution boasted 1360 borrowers on the register (approximately 3.5 per cent of the population of Hobart).¹⁴³ Taylor wrote to Andrew Carnegie in 1908 of ‘the many conveniences provided by the new building [that] have enabled

¹⁴³ Borrowing rights for the library were initially restricted to those on the ratepayer’s role, and adult residents of Hobart within the city boundary who could gain the guarantee of a ratepayer. In 1912 the library extended its borrowing rights to all citizens on ratepayers’ rolls throughout Tasmania. This expansion of the library’s service was stipulated by the Tasmanian parliament, as a condition of its £50 increase to the library’s annual subsidy in 1912. The Tasmanian Public Library was a national leader in this aspect of its service, no doubt due to the minimal library facilities available in regional Tasmania. The Melbourne Public Library, by contrast, did not open its lending library to those outside the city of Melbourne and suburbs until 1921: R Munn and ER Pitt, *Australian libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, Melbourne, 1935, p. 51. The percentage is based on the population figure for Hobart in 1906 of 39,230 people. In 1911, the next available census from the Australian Bureau of Statistics, population had remained fairly static, at 40,200: Australian Historical Population Statistics, 2006, Australian Bureau of Statistics website, <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/3105.0.65.0012006>, accessed 12 August 2009.

us to considerably increase our sphere of operations and usefulness'.¹⁴⁴ Citizens were reported to be pleased to have 'enjoyed the privilege of having books to read at home during the cold evenings'.¹⁴⁵

The lending library and the stimulation of local philanthropy

Tasmanian Public Library trustees acknowledged that the new lending collection would take time to establish and would 'have to commence in a very humble way', given the minimal funding available.¹⁴⁶ It was also recognised that the library would be compelled to rely to a great degree on donations from the public to both commence and maintain the collection. An application made to the Melbourne Public Library for donations of books prior to the opening had been refused, on the grounds that any donations could only be directed to libraries within the Victorian library community.¹⁴⁷ Taylor and his trustees recognised that the Tasmanian community would necessarily be the best source of donations for the new facility, and began an active campaign to that end. Donors were invited to participate in the socially progressive project that the public library and its new lending facility represented. In November 1905 librarian Taylor made a first call through the local press on 'the book lovers in Tasmania ... who might help to educate the masses' by their donations.¹⁴⁸ Taylor had written to the trustees on 3 November 1905, noting that:

...the time has now come when we must commence to make our collection of books for the circulating branch of the New Library and I

¹⁴⁴ AJ Taylor to Andrew Carnegie, 8 September 1908, in Librarian's letterbook, SLT3/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁴⁵ 'Tasmanian Public Library. A Presentation of Books', *Mercury*, 27 July 1910, p. 7.

¹⁴⁶ 'Mr Andrew Carnegie and the Tasmanian Public Library', *Tasmanian News*, 17 November 1902, p. 2.

¹⁴⁷ Minutes of Library Committee of the Melbourne Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery, 30 August 1906, vol. 47, MSF 12855, State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV), Melbourne; request declined in Minutes of Books Committee of the Melbourne Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery, 18 September 1906, vol. 39, MSF 12855, SLV. The Melbourne Library declined the request, considering that if donations were to be made to other institutions (which was not usual), they should be made to other Victorian libraries. Chairman of trustees of the Melbourne library, Henry Gyles Turner, presented 11 volumes from his private collection to the Tasmanian lending library in 1907: 'Tasmanian Public Library', *Mercury*, 27 June 1907, p. 5.

¹⁴⁸ AJ Taylor, 'Tasmanian Public Library', circular, 14 November 1905, in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart. The circular was published on 22 November in the *Tasmanian News* and the *Mercury*.

have to request that the Trustees will give me power to make an appeal to the public by circular and other wise for donations of Books to the Institution. I feel certain that by this means a very considerable addition may be made to the books we shall have to purchase for our circulating library.¹⁴⁹

Linking philanthropic action not only to utilitarianism, but also to religious inspiration, Taylor suggested that:

Among the book lovers in Tasmania there must be a large number who could well spare a few up to date works from their shelves ... and who might help to educate the masses by placing within their reach literature of an instructive and useful character. No better missionary work than this can be taken in hand.¹⁵⁰

Noting that some citizens had already approached the library with offers of individual volumes ('in one instance a gentleman who has some two or three hundred recent works in his possession would be prepared to donate the lot to the new Library if requested to do so') Taylor was 'authorised by the trustees to make this offer public' so that they might put items from their personal libraries 'at the disposal of the Trustees for the benefit of the public'.¹⁵¹ In 1906 a further notice was published in the local press informing the public that the librarian would be 'glad to receive presentations of books for the library. Even single volumes will be acceptable. Books or donations in cash should be sent in at once.'¹⁵² 'Up to date works' of 'an instructive and useful character' were specified. 'Recent Works of History, Travel, Biography, Art, Poetry, Theology, Philosophy, Science, and General Literature' were 'particularly desirable' to stock the new lending library. Works of fiction were 'acceptable'.¹⁵³ Carnegie's sentiment regarding the nature of the stock was central to the type of books that were considered appropriate for donating to the new library. Trustees noted that Carnegie's 'often expressed wish with regard to such libraries is that they should consist mainly of useful

¹⁴⁹ AJ Taylor, letter to the trustees, 3 November 1905 'The new circulating branch', inset in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵⁰ AJ Taylor, 'Tasmanian Public Library', circular 14 November 1905.

¹⁵¹ Ibid.

¹⁵² 'Tasmanian Public Library', *Mercury*, 7 September 1906, p. 5.

¹⁵³ AJ Taylor, 'Tasmanian Public Library', circular, 14 November 1905.

educational and high-class literary works'. Periodicals and light literature were 'quite secondary considerations'.

As was the case in American Carnegie-built libraries, the receipt of the Carnegie grant in Tasmania had a clear effect of stimulating further philanthropy at the local level through stock donation to the lending collection. Many citizens responded to the call for philanthropic aid, and Taylor received credit from city officials for the unprecedented public beneficence to the library, having 'aroused interest in the undertaking in all quarters'.¹⁵⁴ Although a spirit of voluntary assistance towards the library was not new, it can be seen to have spread more widely across all strata of the community in response to the Carnegie funding. Contributions came from 'well-known citizens', 'from rich and poor alike', varying from single volumes to a large bequests, and from all classes who were excited by the new vision of a library for all, and who already read widely, from fiction to historical and scientific literature.¹⁵⁵

Describing the opening of the lending facility at the Free Public Library in Cambridge, UK, in 1858, historian John Pink observed that 'no sooner had the books begun to circulate freely in the homes of the people, than a new interest was created and many books were added by donation'.¹⁵⁶ Similarly at the Tasmanian Public Library, it is evident that a new engagement instigated by the creation of a lending facility and the opportunity to borrow books was central to stimulating increased donations. Of the 5,700 volumes with which the lending library opened, 2,000 were donated, amounting to 35 per cent of the book stock.¹⁵⁷ The proportion of public donations of books to the institution compared to acquisitions through purchase continued to be significant in the following decade. From 1907 to 1914, only 2,500 volumes were added to the library collection. Of these 1,650 (66 per cent) were donated.¹⁵⁸

¹⁵⁴ 'The Carnegie Library', *Mercury*, 5 July 1907, p. 6.

¹⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁶ Pink, *'After Fifty Years': a retrospect of the Public Free Library, Cambridge*, p. 4.

¹⁵⁷ Some disparities of figures for the volumes appear in the primary sources.

¹⁵⁸ 'Public Library. Deputation to Ministers', *Mercury*, 30 May 1914, p. 6.

Large-scale donations to the lending library from prominent individuals continued in the decades after the opening. In July 1910 octogenarian Charles Walch gave 117 volumes from his private collection with an aim to ‘induce persons, especially young persons, to form the habit of reading, which will most certainly “grow by what it feeds on”’.¹⁵⁹ With the gift, specifically intended for the lending library, he gave ‘500 copies of an annotated catalogue’ of the books of his gift, consisting of ‘notes’ on the books with which he hoped ‘to awaken ... interest in the books themselves’, and be ‘likely to prove helpful to readers who have largely to depend upon library literature for their education’.¹⁶⁰ Walch’s interest in inducing young people to read can be linked with his innovative teaching at the Davey Street Congregational Church Sunday School. Walch was one of the ‘galaxy of improvers’¹⁶¹ who sought to transform the penal colony into a respectable and thriving community in the period. His contribution to the work of the public library clearly articulated his moral convictions. However, Walch was also a competitive businessman and a central figure of Hobart’s book trade and literary life, running the bookstore *J Walch and Son* with his brother since the 1850s and editing the popular *Walch’s Literary Intelligencer* and *Walch’s Tasmanian Almanack*, both standard Hobartian reading matter.¹⁶² His donations would have likely been good for business. Similarly, the Davies family, owners of the major local newspaper the *Mercury*,¹⁶³ gave a major donation (over 600 volumes) to the lending library in 1907, and continued to be generous, donating another 66 books in 1910.¹⁶⁴

¹⁵⁹ ‘Tasmanian Public Library. A presentation of books’, *Mercury*, 27 July 1910, p. 7; ‘Meetings. Tasmanian Public Library’, *Mercury*, 1 September 1910, p. 3. Walch’s gift did not include any Australian material, but rather British history, especially of Wellington, Cromwell, and Garibaldi.

¹⁶⁰ ‘Tasmanian Public Library’, *Mercury*, 27 July 1910, p. 7.

¹⁶¹ LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania volume II: colony and state from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1991, p. 69.

¹⁶² N Smith, ‘Walch, Charles Edward (1830-1915)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060360b.htm?hilite=walch>, accessed 10 June 2009.

¹⁶³ The *Mercury* had absorbed the other principal papers of Hobart in the late 1850s, including the *Tasmanian Daily News*, the *Daily Courier*, and the *Hobart Town Courier*, and had continued to thrive into the early twentieth century: Robson, *A history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 52.

¹⁶⁴ ‘Tasmanian Public Library’, *Daily Post*, 28 November 1910, p. 3.

Further implications of the lending department

The implications of Carnegie's philanthropy were great, affecting the institution in a number of distinct but linked ways. Ongoing funding issues have been alluded to, and the stimulation for local philanthropy. A further aspect is the change brought about by the creation of a lending department, in an institution that had formerly consisted of a reference collection only. Reference collections were clearly associated with 'national' concerns for the major state institutions. The creation of a lending collection at the state libraries was seen by professionals to challenge the primacy of this conception, as noted in the previous chapter. Taylor was supported by library professionals at the other state libraries in the face of criticism by citizens for the small amount of literature moved from the reference collections to the lending collections.

The creation of lending facilities in the state libraries stimulated debate about access and elitism. While the creation of a lending branch in 1873 for the Sydney Free Public Library was apparently unproblematic,¹⁶⁵ when the Melbourne Public Library proposed opening a lending facility in 1891 there was documented concern about the merits of such an institution and the allocation of books for the new facility.¹⁶⁶ Trustees planned to constitute the lending collection by 'transferring such books as were suitable and could be spared from the Reference Library, and by adding such new books as funds would permit'.¹⁶⁷ The funds requested from the Victorian Government for the purpose were refused. The 6,000 volumes available for loan when the lending library in Melbourne was opened in

¹⁶⁵ Richardson wrote that the lending library was seen as meeting 'local needs', and was the 'logical corollary of the "Free Public Library" idea of 1869' when the Sydney library was established: GD Richardson, *The colony's quest for a national library*, Sydney, 1960, p. 21. In 1909 the lending branch separated from the Public Library and became the Sydney Municipal Library. However, Francis Cass suggests that HCL Anderson was keen to sever the lending function of the library because its existing collection (predominantly fiction) challenged the primacy of Public Library as 'an educational institution': FMB Cass, *Librarians in New South Wales: a study*, Adelaide, 1972, p. 19.

¹⁶⁶ See for example, 'Trades-Hall Council', *Argus*, 11 April 1891, p. 11; 'A free lending library for Melbourne. A scheme to be adopted', *Argus*, 29 May 1891, p. 9; 'The lending branch of the public library', *Argus*, 7 February 1893, p. 7.

¹⁶⁷ E la T Armstrong, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1856-1906*, Melbourne, 1906, p. 64.

August 1892 were eventually transferred from the reference collections of the library.¹⁶⁸

The opening of the Tasmanian Carnegie free lending library also had implications for transfer of stock from the reference collections. The fact that only a handful of volumes and some bound volumes of old magazines and journals were transferred to the lending collection from the pre-Carnegie reference collection stimulated public debate.¹⁶⁹ The *Mercury* editorial was of the opinion that Taylor:

...labours under the delusion that the Lending Library has an excellent assortment of books, whereas there are hundreds of books on the shelves of the so-called Reference Library, which should be in the lending branch, and would be in any other place except Tasmania. All the excuses and special pleadings cannot get over the fact that hundreds of books are lying idle which a large number of people want to read, and it is the duty of the Trustees to see that the want is supplied.¹⁷⁰

The change to include a lending function had shifted the library's philosophy at a fundamental level. Even as lending opened up the library to distributed reading, it deflected attention from the emerging conception of the library as an archive of the locality. The first notions of the necessity for 'special spaces' arose through major philanthropic donations to the institution. This can be demonstrated most clearly after the reception of the largest single collection to the public library since

¹⁶⁸ Armstrong, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria*, p. 68. AJ Taylor stated that the Melbourne Public Library opened their lending collection with only 3,100 volumes, to demonstrate that the lending library in Hobart was not as seriously understocked as the press claimed: Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart. By contrast, T Fleming Cooke, the librarian in charge of the lending branch at the Melbourne Public Library, claimed in 1928 that the lending branch opened in 1892 'with 6,000 volumes transferred from the main library': T Fleming Cooke, 'The public lending library of Victoria', in *Proceedings of the Australian library conference: held at the University of Melbourne, August, 1928*, Melbourne, 1928, p. 42.

¹⁶⁹ 'A public want', *Mercury*, 26 July 1907, p. 8. Proportions of reference to lending collections were different in different libraries around the world in the period. Library historian Bertram Dyer wrote in 1903 that 'in America the Reference departments are small - the books are nearly all available for home reading. In England the reverse is the case, the Reference being frequently larger than the Lending department. In South Africa we frequently adopt the happy medium by putting our books in the Reference Section and permitting their issue on a special signature form': BL Dyer, *The public library systems of Great Britain, America and South Africa*, Kimberley, 1903, pp. 16-17.

¹⁷⁰ 'The Public Library', *Mercury*, 30 September 1907, p. 4.

its reopening in 1870, the Justin McCarty Browne collection. Appropriate housing for this significant collection prompted calls to parliament in 1890 for increased space, ideally in a new building, and ‘an additional room ... in which works of great value and interest, and also documents of importance, may be kept secure’.¹⁷¹ ‘Many such works’ were currently held by the institution ‘that now have to be kept in the librarian’s room, or locked up in a very inconvenient and overcrowded room in the head of the present library staircase’.¹⁷² In the new building, the ‘additional room’ for special collections did not materialise.

The most significant problem lay in the failure to support or enhance the existing reference section of the library. The trustees were unable adequately to operate both reference and lending departments on the available funds. The library’s official subsidies, still divided between the Hobart City Council and the state government, were inadequate for the task of maintaining a ‘national’ institution that was increasingly utilised by the public. The inadequacy of the financial resources had the greatest impact on the book stock in the reference collection. The collection inevitably became degraded through high use, with very little funding for repairs or replacements, after the wages of staff, and building maintenance costs were taken out of subsidies. One disappointed citizen wrote to the trustees in 1912 describing the library as ‘a disgrace to the town’ and ‘a miserable place, quite useless for research’.¹⁷³ Book purchasing was at the bottom of the list for allocation of funds.

In 1914 a deputation from the Tasmanian Public Library trustees led by Chairman Bolton Stafford Bird waited upon the Government Chief Secretary JE Ogden, pleading for increased subsidies.¹⁷⁴ The deputation claimed that the library:

¹⁷¹ ‘The Tasmanian Public Library. By the Librarian’, *Mercury*, 27 June 1890, p. 3.

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

¹⁷³ AJ Taylor to EL Piesse, 30 October 1912, in Librarian’s letterbook, SLT3/1/2, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁷⁴ Bolton Stafford Bird, a former Congregationalist minister, was the Member for Franklin from 1882. He was a ‘staunch liberal’, and served on the Royal Commission for compulsory education in the early 1880s. See CJ Craig, ‘Bird, Bolton Stafford (1840-1924)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030155b.htm>, accessed 12 July 2009.

...was not so useful as it might be ... The Library officials were constantly being asked for special books on various subjects, and had to reply that the books were not in the Library. Frequently second-hand copies of the latest standard works were sought for, to meet the demand. Letters appeared in the press complaining that the Library was not up to date.¹⁷⁵

The library was granted a small increase in subsidies after this plea, but the money was largely directed to staff wages.¹⁷⁶ By 1920 the library collection was static, at some 22,000 volumes.¹⁷⁷ Frequent appeals continued to be made through the press to the public to donate funds or books to sustain the ailing institution.¹⁷⁸

The 'financial starvation' of the Tasmanian Public Library in the ensuing decades was not unusual for Carnegie-built libraries.¹⁷⁹ The award of a Carnegie grant removed the income source from subscriptions, and instead charged the applicant with organising funding through taxes. Carnegie stipulated minimum ongoing financial support, based on a dollar or pound amount per head of population in any given town.¹⁸⁰ Settlements on financial input from local government set at the

¹⁷⁵ 'Public Library. Deputation to Ministers', *Mercury*, 30 May 1914, p. 6.

¹⁷⁶ Compounding increased public demand for books in the reference as well as the lending collections, funds available for book purchases had been steadily decreasing since 1880: from 1880 to 1885 £487 was available for book purchases; from 1885 to 1890, £384; from 1910 to 1915 £375; from 1915 to 1919 £230, less than half of the amount available three decades earlier. The price of books in this period was also increasing. Only £21 was left after expenses for the purchase of new books and 'unforeseen contingencies' for 1919: *Tasmanian Public Library Annual Report for the year 1918*; 'Tasmanian Public Library. Report for the year 1918', *Mercury*, 26 February 1919, p. 2.

¹⁷⁷ 'The Jubilee Year. Tasmania's Public Library', *World* (Hobart), 17 December 1920, p. 3.

¹⁷⁸ The Public Library of Tasmania was not alone in struggling for funds in this period. The Melbourne Public Library was experiencing financial pressures '[o]wing to the high cost of books and of all material required in connection with bookbinding and the general upkeep of the Public Library' and the trustees were 'compelled to restrict the purchase of books and to ask the Government for a grant of £1,500...to meet the increased expenditure': E la T Armstrong, *The book of the Public Library, museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1906-1931*, Melbourne, 1932, pp. 42-44. Unlike in Tasmania, the Melbourne library was usually successful in its financial requests.

¹⁷⁹ Horrocks, 'The Carnegie Corporation of New York', p. 388.

¹⁸⁰ In many cases, the tax burden placed upon the local community to support the Carnegie library was the core reason for the rejection of Carnegie grants, as the community made it clear to their elected council that they were unwilling to support a rate increase for the purpose of a library. For an extensive discussion of this phenomenon, see Martin, *Carnegie denied*. Michael Dewe has noted that this was the case with non-Carnegie and Carnegie libraries in Britain, finding that 'an investment in a building ... whether donated or local-authority funded, could result in inadequate return if restrictive legislation [such as the penny rate], or a local authority's lack of, or unwillingness to spend, money, meant that it could not receive sufficient resources of books and

time of the grant were often not adjusted as the years went by, so that in real terms the available funds became significantly smaller. Carnegie's position (reported by his assistant James Bertram) was that the community should be activated to raise its annual maintenance appropriation if it was not enough to provide for all the necessary books. Libraries and their managers were also encouraged to raise funds through subscriptions and lectures, and appeals to community philanthropy.¹⁸¹ Ongoing community philanthropic aid was typically a corollary of Carnegie building grants.

Conclusion

Recent literature in the field of library history has highlighted the importance of philanthropy to the development and character of public libraries. Philanthropy, as small-scale donations, bricks-and-mortar building funds, or major collection donations, marks individual institutions indelibly. Philanthropy for libraries typically reflects and promotes local as well as national concerns and identities. In the context of colonial Australia, philanthropy for libraries had a particular flavour. It reflected urgent and ongoing concerns about the nature of newly established communities, particularly where there were deep concerns about moral rectitude and progress in the post-penal context. Library philanthropy often emerged from a perception of urgency to establish institutions of educational merit, conceived in terms of a general progress to moral enlightenment.

This chapter has focused on the evolution of socially derived cultural philanthropy in the Tasmanian Public Library in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century. In this period, philanthropy was directed to the salvation and moral direction of the self, and the library and the community were united in a clear perception of the type of elevating literature to promote this end. The cultural coherence promoted by the library was sustained by philanthropic practices that largely conformed to the values promoted by the institution, although a shift to donations that more closely reflected the geography, history and current affairs of

staff': M Dewe, 'Built to last', in M Kinnell and RP Sturges (eds.), *Continuity and innovation in the public library: the development of a social institution*, London, 1996, p. 90.

¹⁸¹ Bobinski, *Carnegie libraries*, p. 109.

the locality can be discerned in the last decades of the century. The reception of Andrew Carnegie's building grant to the Tasmanian Public Library in 1902 was a stimulus to institutional adaptation, with the creation of a lending branch for the first time at the Tasmanian Public Library. This broke down the library's inherited philosophy of non-lending and affected the early evolution of its self-reflexive identity as archive of the locality and the nation.

The following chapter considers how cultural negotiation occurred more explicitly through philanthropy that articulated an increased privileging of the local and national. This occurred through what is identified in this thesis as a distinct shift in philanthropic aims. This shift entailed a move towards more explicitly patriotic motivations for major philanthropy, and was expressed through 'national' collections that were donated to key institutions in the early twentieth century. This philanthropy was fed by increased national sentiment from the 1890s onwards, and by a perception of the role of the public library in promoting cultural nationalism. In line with growing interest in the construction of local and national histories — and as a means to access and promote a shared, consensual past — philanthropy in the early twentieth century often enacted narratives of 'Australian-ness', articulating a new relation between the public library and the state and the national communities. The following chapter addresses the acceleration of this shift to patriotic philanthropy in greater detail, focusing on the collector philanthropist, William Walker.

CHAPTER 4:

Patriotism and civic faith: library philanthropy and cultural change, part 2

Introduction

Chapter 4 continues the examination of library philanthropy in the Australian public library in the context of developing local and national identities and the evolving role of the institution and its collections. This chapter specifically addresses major collection philanthropy, and the activities of bibliophiles who privileged the literature of their region and nation in their own collecting practices, and subsequently in their donations to state institutions. Factors that influenced the formation of this type of collection in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries are considered, and the chapter identifies a shift in the nature of the agency exerted through philanthropy in the new century, focusing on the newly nationalistic philanthropic motivations of many library philanthropists at this time.

This chapter first characterises changes that occurred in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries through a subtle shift from moral to patriotic philanthropy, reflected in national themed collection donations. It then outlines patriotic collecting practices that fed this philanthropy in Australasia, from the late nineteenth century to the early twentieth century. To contextualise patriotic philanthropy, the chapter briefly describes the Australian book collecting culture that enabled this specific philanthropic practice.¹ An examination of the collecting activities and patriotic philanthropy of Tasmanian Public Library philanthropist

¹ The increasing number of studies of book culture in Australia attests to the rapidly growing interest among cultural historians in the field in this country. The publication of the volume of essays M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, marks a high point in scholarship on the subject, and will be complemented by further volumes. Other studies enlarge upon this theme, and expand the period under examination, including the earlier compilation of essays DH Borchardt and W Kirsop (eds.), *The Book in Australia: essays towards a cultural & social history*, Melbourne, 1988. As Mark Askew and Brian Hubber note in this latter volume, the study of books in Australia must not only encompass the didactic aspects of books, as carriers of ideas and cultural values, contributing to the social and political attitudes of society, but also must address the role of books as cultural artefacts. See M Askew and B Hubber, 'The colonial reader observed: reading in its cultural context', in Borchardt and Kirsop, *The Book in Australia*, pp. 110-37.

William Walker constitutes the bulk of the chapter. Walker's donation to the Tasmanian Public Library, given in two parts in 1923-24, and posthumously in 1933, consisted of at least 3,800 books.² The most significant part of Walker's donation was the Australiana and Tasmaniana, which consisted of around 1,800 volumes. With this part of the donation Walker explicitly aimed to remedy the fact that the library had made no special provision for Australian or Tasmanian literature. The chapter analyses Walker's bibliophilic and philanthropic motivations in the context of what can be ascertained about his reading and his personal philosophy, largely through his library itself, and his extant letters. It considers his bibliophilic and philanthropic activities related to Australiana in the context of his annalist approach, his creation of amateur expertise, and his hoarding. The chapter seeks to understand this complex mix through the wider context of the phenomena of hobbies and valorised, 'productive' leisure that emerged in the nineteenth century.

Changing perceptions of philanthropy in Australasia

As described at the end of Chapter 3, the newly formed Library Association of Australasia was alert to the poor record of major benefaction to Australian public libraries in the nineteenth century. The issue was raised in the editorials (written by Edmund la Touche Armstrong and HCL Anderson) of the *Library Record of Australasia* in 1902 on two occasions, and at the national conferences from 1896 to 1902. Commentators blamed the paucity of major philanthropy on the lack of a 'leisured class' in Australia, which might have had the means, opportunity and education to engage with the ideals and needs of the public library as an educational institution for all classes.³ In April 1902 the editorial of the *Library Record* reflected that '[w]e certainly have not as yet a cultured class with leisure to devote to the guidance of their less fortunate brothers in the choice of

² Some contemporary estimates were as high as 12,000 volumes. The lower figure represents totals of volumes accessioned in extant registers. The higher figure was estimated in AE Browning, 'History of the State Library of Tasmania', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 8, no. 2, 1959, p. 86. Some of the variance in totals can be ascribed to the sorting and removal of Walker books not considered useful for the Tasmanian Public Library prior to accessioning. These volumes were distributed to various other repositories including the Royal Hospital in Hobart and the various lighthouses around the state.

³ Anon., 'Introductory', *The Library Record of Australasia*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1902, p. 2.

literature'.⁴ In the June 1902 issue the editorial pursued the theme further, noting:

In young countries such as ours there is no leisured class. A few persons indeed achieve wealth that they can neither use nor enjoy. But the *vis inertiae* of the older countries is lacking, and it is a force that could be well used in many ways, and perhaps in no way better than in helping our libraries. As collectors, as trustees, as lecturers, a few educated men of leisure could do much to assist these institutions. They would be able to guide the progress of local institutes.⁵

HCL Anderson criticised Australia's lacklustre record of private benefaction in a paper entitled 'State subsidies and private benefactions to libraries' at the second Library Association conference in 1898. Anderson acknowledged the history of state support for public libraries, which he considered 'very nearly as generous, if perhaps not so judicious, as that which has been given in the older countries of the world', but suggested that in philanthropy Australia had 'not yet peculiarly distinguished itself'.⁶ Anderson spoke to the necessary relationship between government and private sponsorship of cultural institutions, but suggested that the newly formed Library Association could 'do much to cultivate the library spirit' in potential benefactors.⁷ At the 1902 conference Anderson asked:

Can any one of us discover some minute microbe or bacterium — let us call it in anticipation that *bacillus bibliothecae* — of which we may make a pure culture for inoculating some of our influential public men and wealthy citizens — the men who might do much to encourage this great educational agency...?⁸

These future philanthropists, Anderson considered, were 'at present, when not actively hostile or offensively contemptuous, at best passively resistant'.⁹ Anderson concluded his paper with mention of David Scott Mitchell, the 'worthy

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Anon., 'The library record', *The Library Record of Australasia*, vol. 2, no. 2, 1902, p. 44.

⁶ HCL Anderson, 'State subsidies and private benefactions to libraries', in *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898*, Sydney, 1898, p. 60.

⁷ Anderson, 'State subsidies and private benefactions to libraries', p. 61.

⁸ HCL Anderson, 'Public libraries and the government subsidy', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting of the Library Association of Australasia held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, pp. 14-15.

⁹ Ibid.

pioneer in the field of public library endowment in Australia',¹⁰ who had in 1898 presented the Public Library of New South Wales with over 10,000 of his non-Australian books, as a confirmation of his intent to give the larger Australian collection to the institution on the provision of a new building to house the collections separately as the 'Mitchell Library'.¹¹ (The foundation stone for this new building was not laid until September 1906.) Anderson did not distinguish the thematic content of library benefaction in any specific way. Rather, philanthropy was characterised in terms of its utilitarian and idealist role in promoting public libraries and their mission. Within a decade, however, a new perception of the patriotic benefits of library benefaction emerged and was articulated in the press and by library professionals, reflecting the *type* of collection donated. This new perception of philanthropy resulted directly from the actions of large-scale donors of 'national' materials, and can be seen clearly in the press response to the opening of two significant libraries at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century: the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and the Hocken Library in New Zealand, described below.

Book collectors and patriotic philanthropy

In 1897, a New Zealand doctor called Thomas Morland Hocken, 'a neat, dapper little man', 'bustling, energetic' and 'intensely industrious' offered his collection of New Zealand history and literature to the people of Dunedin and New Zealand.¹² Hocken hoped that this collection and the purpose-built library that housed it would be 'a repository for the archives of history not only of New Zealand, but of the colonies generally'.¹³ Hocken had arrived in New Zealand in 1862, and found the pioneering history of the Otago region 'romantic'. Fearing that it was disappearing fast in the changes brought by the Otago gold rush, he set about collecting books, manuscripts, oral history and other artefactual records of

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ For a comprehensive description see B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, NSW, 2007.

¹² AH McIntock, 'Hocken, Thomas Morland (1836-1910)', *An encyclopaedia of New Zealand*, 1966, <http://www.teara.govt.nz/1966/H/HockenThomasMorland/HockenThomasMorland/en>, accessed 16 July 2009.

¹³ EH McCormick, *The fascinating folly: Dr. Hocken and his fellow collectors*, Dunedin, NZ, 1961, pp. 46-47.

the past, an activity he continued incessantly through the rest of his life. In 1909 he published the *Bibliography of the literature relating to New Zealand*, the key work on the subject for more than sixty years.¹⁴ His offer of his collection to New Zealand was made on the condition (like DS Mitchell) of suitable housing. The Government and citizens of Dunedin contributed to a new building to house the Hocken collection, to be administered by the Council of the University of Otago as trustees for the nation. The Hocken Collection was opened on 23 March 1910, only weeks after the opening of the Mitchell Library in Sydney.

Reporting on this event, the Melbourne *Argus*, highlighting the co-incidence of the opening to the public of these two great collections, observed that for Hocken:

To glean rare manuscripts, old prints, forgotten papers, and out-of-the-way books was for him a labour of love, and the idea that he was at the same time doing a service to his country gave added meat to his enjoyment. It is indeed a patriotic service which collectors like Dr. Hocken in New Zealand and Mr. Scott Mitchell in Australia have performed in building up choice historical libraries for the public benefit.¹⁵

Hocken, the correspondent wrote, was a man ‘whose name has long been honourably associated with research into the early history of Australasia’, his collection of New Zealand historical records being ‘the most complete in the world’. Rising to the theme, the correspondent considered that:

There must be enthusiasm in the cause, patient watching for every opportunity to add to the collection, and selective judgment based on knowledge. These personal powers, as well as their purses, public-spirited collectors of this type lend to their country when they garner for it treasures of history. Dr. Hocken felt, while amassing his library, that he was putting into practice a tenet of his civic faith — “that it is the bounden duty of every citizen to do something for his state, in the welfare of which his own happiness and prosperity is largely found”. This is real patriotism, and it is to be regretted that more of our

¹⁴ R Barrowman, ‘A labour of love: Dr Hocken and his collection’, in S Strachan and L Tyler (eds.), *Kataoka Hakana, treasures from the Hocken collections*, Dunedin, NZ, 2007, p. 17.

¹⁵ ‘The Argus’, *Argus* (Melbourne), 14 April 1910, p. 6.

citizens do not make up their minds to continuous service of the kind.¹⁶

Such a perception of the value and role of patriotic philanthropy can also be seen in the pride in the newly created 'national' collections expressed by members of the public. Patriotic sentiment, attentiveness to the value of the historical archive for the nation, and appreciation of the efforts of patriotically motivated philanthropists can be seen in descriptions of the Mitchell collection published in the Australian literary periodical *Lone Hand* in 1907 by literary critic Bertram Stevens¹⁷ and journalist and historian Arthur Jose,¹⁸ and for a poem composed by a member of the public as a paean for the institution:

The Mitchell Library [the poem began]
Here! stranger, pause!! for now before thee lies the shrine
Of Austral Nationhood.
Behind thee are the busy streets, and hum of Life.
Within the Past sets out in scroll and folded line
How much the Present owes (apart from party strife)
Those little understood.

Here is our Hist'ry traced: its annals kept intact
For those as yet unborn.
When Deeds, inspired by Hope, await the tardy meed
Of Judgement calmed by later years, that should detract
From Truth, no circumstance to suit the hour, or need
Of Times, by Faction torn.

¹⁶ Ibid. Sir George Grey is also significant in New Zealand book history, as a collector and philanthropist. Governor of New Zealand 1845-53 and 1861-68, and Governor of the Cape in South Africa 1854-61, Grey formed an outstanding collection of European books, the majority of which he donated to the South African Public Library. Grey formed an interest in early African printed ephemera, and the products of the early South African mission presses, which he also donated. See National Library of South Africa, <http://www.nlsa.ac.za/NLSA/aboutus/core%20functions/colman/special-collections#f>
In New Zealand, he donated further collections to the Auckland City Library, among others. His New Zealand donations were not explicitly patriotic in content. See D Kerr, 'Sir George Grey and the English antiquarian book trade', in R Myers, MH Harris and G Mandelbrote (eds.), *Libraries and the book trade: the formation of collections from the sixteenth to the twentieth century*, New Castle, Delaware, 2000, pp. 85-123. DS Mitchell and William Walker were aware of Grey's collecting and philanthropy, both owning copies of his catalogues of his collections, and, in Walker's case, the book by WL Rees and L Rees, *The life and times of Sir George Grey, K.C.B.*, Auckland, 1892. For Mitchell's interest in Grey, see P Brunton, 'The collector collected', in *A grand obsession: the DS Mitchell story*, Sydney, 2007, p. 48.

¹⁷ Bertram Stevens, 'The Mitchell Library', *Lone Hand*, 1 October 1907.

¹⁸ Arthur W Jose, 'David Scott Mitchell', *Lone Hand*, 2 September 1907.

Here may the coldest heart with patriotism glow,
That knew it not before...¹⁹

Similarly, bibliographer John Ferguson referred to the ‘patriotism and imagination’ that ‘every citizen’ should exert in philanthropically supporting the enrichment of the Mitchell collection, when the prospect of acquiring James Cook’s autograph diary of his first voyage to Australia arose in 1923.²⁰

Patriotism was also commonly evoked in relation to donations to the infant Australian National Library. In 1907 the *Adelaide Advertiser* featured an article on the future national library in the Federal capital, describing it as:

...a centre to which may gravitate as years pass, manuscripts and other documents and records of all kinds whatever, relating to the discovery, colonisation, history, and development of Australia and its adjacent regions; a shrine wherein all literary treasures may be suitably preserved, and to which public funds and private benefactors may all contribute.²¹

Noting that the library already contained ‘16,000 books, about two-thirds of which relate to Australia’, the correspondent reported that ‘the committee believes that as time goes on and the national character of the library is more widely recognised, patriotic Australians will find increasing delight in presenting valuable gifts to so noble an institution’.²² Edward Augustus Petherick, one of Australia’s most significant and successful early collectors of Australiana, was the first to direct a substantial gift to the institution. Petherick’s philanthropy was strongly motivated by Australian Federation. He made a first (unsuccessful) offer to the Australian people of his large private collection via the Agents General in London in 1895 as ‘a help towards Federation’.²³ His substantial collection of

¹⁹ Walter R Dibbs, quoted in DJ Jones, *A source of inspiration & delight: the buildings of the State Library of New South Wales since 1826*, Sydney, 1988, pp. 59-60.

²⁰ JA Ferguson, ‘Cook’s diary’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 21 February 1923, p. 12. The manuscript was acquired by the National Library.

²¹ ‘A great library’, *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 10 August 1907, p. 7.

²² Ibid.

²³ ‘A help towards Federation’, *The Colonies and India: European mail. Home edition*, (London), 21 December 1895, quoted in AD Osborn and M Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, 1901-27 and the origins of the National Library of Australia*, Canberra, 1989, p. 64. The

some 10,000 books and 6,500 pamphlets was finally accepted by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library in 1909, and formed the basis of what was to become the National Library in Canberra.²⁴ Petherick offered his collection as a 'gift to the Commonwealth as the nucleus of a national library', conceiving his philanthropy as expressing 'a strong desire to serve my country in some useful capacity (surely a praiseworthy desire)'.²⁵

The notion of patriotism related to library benefaction was not new. When a privately funded free public reading room and reference collection was made available for the first time in Sydney in 1860, a letter to the *Sydney Morning Herald* praised the 'benevolent and patriotic individuals' who had made this service available, and urged 'persons leaving the colony, authors, and a few of the patriotic professional gentlemen and booksellers' to contribute books to the institution for its continued growth.²⁶ However, there was a new flavour to the patriotism evoked at the turn of the twentieth century related to the specific content of the books and collections donated, specifically those promoting national identity through history and literature. Philanthropists were still conceived as 'filling the breach' left by the state in the provision of specific social or cultural services, as in the nineteenth century,²⁷ but this role could now take on a specifically nationalistic tone. As Alexander Turnbull wrote in 1911 of Hocken's and Mitchell's philanthropy, these collectors had 'made considerable personal sacrifices to do the work that should have been done by the governments of their respective colonies ... without hope or wish for reward'.²⁸

collection was viewed in London by HCL Anderson but Petherick's offer was not accepted at this time.

²⁴ For a detailed description of Petherick's collecting practice see Osborn and Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library*, especially Ch. 6 'The Petherick saga'. See also P Biskup, 'Edward Augustus Petherick and the National Library of Australia, 1909-1917', in P Biskup and MK Rochester (eds.), *Australian library history*, Canberra, 1985, pp. 75-95.

²⁵ EA Petherick, letter to the editor, 'An Australian Library', *Argus*, 8 January 1909, p. 4.

²⁶ 'Free Public Library', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 1 June 1860, p. 5.

²⁷ See T Adam, 'Introduction', in T Adam (ed.), *Philanthropy, patronage, and civil society: experiences from Germany, Great Britain, and North America*, Bloomington, 2004, pp. 1-14.

²⁸ Alexander Turnbull to Percy Smith, 29 June 1911, Alexander Turnbull Library, quoted in McCormick, *The fascinating folly*, p. 32.

The crucial role of book collectors in the development of the world's great libraries has been widely acknowledged. In his *History of libraries in the Western World* Michael Harris writes that it is 'difficult to imagine the great national libraries achieving such significance without the acquisition of the many private collections that became available to them either through purchase, confiscation, or benefaction'.²⁹ This overt connection between nationalism and specific acts of library philanthropy, described in this thesis as 'patriotic philanthropy', has been identified in the historiography of libraries in the North America. Neil Harris has observed in relation to philanthropy to the Library of Congress in the 1880s and 1890s that as a sense of world power emerged the conviction grew that the library's collections should represent the 'history and literature, not just of the United States, but of any culture which Americans might have business knowing about'.³⁰ Harris finds that this new ambition 'undoubtedly helped provoke a series of large private gifts to the Library'.³¹ In her study of philanthropy in America, Francie Ostrower argues that there is a critical 'connection between giving and identity'.³² She finds that philanthropists adapt activities and values that are widespread in society to a way of life that 'serves as a vehicle for the cultural and social life of their class, overlaying it with additional values and norms'.³³ This chapter explores how patriotic philanthropy (related to specific types of collections reflecting national and regional identities) emerges when the 'additional' values of bibliophilism focused on the nation overlay the moral duty typically invoked in earlier library philanthropy.

What were the links between collecting and patriotic philanthropy for the collectors themselves? When did the motivations emerge to collect, with (latent or active) intent to donate the collected 'set' to the nation for the national archive? While the available details on nineteenth-century libraries vary, it is evident that book collecting was a common phenomenon in professional and academic

²⁹ MH Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, Metuchen, NJ, 1995, p. 159.

³⁰ N Harris, 'Public funding for rarity: some American debates', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1996, p. 46.

³¹ Ibid.

³² F Ostrower, *Why the wealthy give: the culture of elite philanthropy*, Princeton, 1995, pp. 6-7.

³³ Ibid.

communities. In colonial Melbourne prominent citizens with large personal book collections included Melbourne Public Library founder and trustee Redmond Barry, Marcus Clarke, James Smith, John Pascoe Fawkner and John Dunmore Lang.³⁴ Askew and Hubber observe that 'to contemporaries, the libraries of the public men and literati indicated the cultural status of their owners', and demonstrated the wide field of knowledge of literature with which these men were acquainted.³⁵ Askew and Hubber observe that 'members of the middle class maintained sizable domestic collections'.³⁶ Book ownership in the middle strata of society was also a status symbol, and reading was an important leisure activity.

Australian book collectors in the first half of the nineteenth century typically avoided excessive specialisation. Private libraries of this period consisted predominantly of 'useful and general cultural material': scientific volumes appropriate to the pursuits of their owners and standard texts that were an 'unchallenged part of the diffuse classical scholarship of the generation'.³⁷ The main lines of European collecting were respected in the second half of the nineteenth century, with emphasis on the 'European experience of book collecting', and European sources, rather than local experiences.³⁸ Wallace Kirsop notes that the fundamental manuals for the formation of a private book collection could be found in the major Australian colonial libraries, forming the basis for a 'certain consensus about collecting values and techniques'.³⁹ Consignments of books from Britain, which formed the majority of book imports in the mid nineteenth century (aside from private library collections that were brought by their owners to the colonies), reflected this perspective.

³⁴ Askew and Hubber, 'The colonial reader observed', pp. 124-26.

³⁵ Askew and Hubber, 'The colonial reader observed', p. 126. Askew and Hubber do not reflect upon the particular specialisation of Australiana collecting in their analysis of private libraries, except in passing in relation to the library of author Marcus Clarke. Clarke's library of 582 volumes contained primary source material necessary for his fiction writing, including 'Tasmanian almanacs, directories, and descriptive accounts of the convict system' (p. 125).

³⁶ Askew and Hubber, 'The colonial reader observed', p. 127.

³⁷ W Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia: individuals and libraries', in BW Rayward (ed.), *Australian library history in context: papers for the third Forum on Australian Library History, University of New South Wales, July 17 and 18, 1987*, Sydney, 1988, p. 77.

³⁸ Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia', p.79.

³⁹ Ibid.

Chapter 1 of this thesis argued that it was the growth in historical consciousness and interest in local history that stimulated the public library in Australia to begin to archive the locality and the nation. Kirsop identifies the same phenomenon in private collecting practices.⁴⁰ He finds evidence for interest in the field as early as the 1860s in book catalogues and advertisements, and argues that ‘conscious collecting of books printed in and relating to the Australian colonies was an established trend’ before the 1880s.⁴¹ The 1890s, however, stand out as the ‘first notable period’ for collecting Australiana.⁴² At this time David Scott Mitchell and booksellers Angus and Robertson established a trend in Australiana bibliophilism that was to become dominant in the early twentieth century.⁴³ Kirsop suggests that Mitchell in the 1880s ‘was preparing a new age with the ever-willing complicity of perspicacious librarians and booksellers.’⁴⁴ Mitchell’s example encouraged rivals and younger emulators in the field, including most notably Alfred Lee, William Dixon and the bibliographer Sir John Alexander Ferguson. The last decade of the nineteenth century and the first of the twentieth century were ones in which Australian material was collected on a grand scale by a number of bibliophiles.⁴⁵ In this period the sale of private libraries still gave opportunities for individuals to secure interesting and rare Australiana directly, while a less adventurous collector could rely on local and international antiquarian booksellers. As recent studies about collecting have argued, collectors often

⁴⁰ Kirsop, ‘Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia’, p. 75, and W Kirsop, *Books for colonial readers: the nineteenth-century Australian experience*, Melbourne, 1995. Kirsop wrote on the Tasmanian situation specifically in ‘Books and readers in colonial Tasmania’, in M Roe, (ed.), *The flow of culture: Tasmanian studies*, Canberra, 1987, pp. 102-33. Keith Adkins has also written on this subject: KE Adkins, ‘For the best of reasons: the Evandale Subscription Library 1847-1861’, PhD Thesis, University of Tasmania, 2004.

⁴¹ Kirsop, *Books for colonial readers*, p. 14. In arguing this periodisation, Kirsop challenges earlier assumptions, such as that made by George Mackaness, who wrote in 1956 that ‘the collection of Australiana was almost a novelty’ in the 1870s-80s: G Mackaness, *The art of book collecting in Australia*, Sydney 1956, p. 95.

⁴² W Kirsop, ‘Private collectors’ libraries’, in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 226.

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Kirsop, ‘Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia’, p. 81.

⁴⁵ Kirsop, ‘Private collectors’ libraries’, p. 227. In their discussion of the origins of the National Library of Australia, Andrew Osborn and Margaret Osborn note that in the first decade of the 20th century the book market in Australia offered many opportunities for the relatively easy formation of a national collection: ‘large lot-offerings ... were constantly being made by booksellers and collectors’ and many Australian book dealers had ‘immense bookstocks available at reasonable prices’: Osborn and Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library*, p. 55.

charge themselves with the responsibility to preserve the ‘disappearing’ past.⁴⁶ In the context of new meta-narratives of nationalism, collecting Australian material and gifting it to the nation could operate as an act of filial patriotism.

William Walker (1861-1933), collector and library philanthropist

In Tasmania, William Walker was one of a small but active group of collectors who made the literature of Australia a particular goal. These included collectors such as Bicheno, Browne, politician Andrew Inglis Clark,⁴⁷ West Coast mine manager Robert Sticht,⁴⁸ newspaper editor Alexander Hume, Morton Allport (and later his son Henry Allport), JB Walker,⁴⁹ WL Crowther and WELH Crowther.⁵⁰ Hume described the type of enthusiasm for local material that gripped these various collectors from different decades, when he observed in 1916 that ‘[a]nything connected with the early days of Tasmania possessed a fascination’.⁵¹

William Walker was born in Hobart on the 25 February 1861 to William Walker (senior) and Caroline Walker (née Cawston). Walker senior was skipper on a number of vessels run by the Anglo-Australian Guano Company, a company

⁴⁶ See, for example, A Lloyd, ‘Guarding against collective amnesia? Making significance problematic: an exploration of issues’, *Library Trends*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2007, pp. 53-66.

⁴⁷ Clark’s library was considered to be one of the best private libraries in Australia in the period. John Reynolds writes that in addition to collecting books on politics and philosophy, Inglis Clark was a ‘pioneer enthusiast for Australian literature, and went to considerable trouble to secure copies of the works of Harpur, Gordon, Kendall, Lawson and other early writers’: J Reynolds, ‘The Clarks of “Rosebank”’, *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, vol. 4, 1955, p. 8.

⁴⁸ See H Gaunt, ‘The Library of Robert Carl Sticht’, *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 78, 2007, pp. 4-26. Sticht’s library was rich in European incunabula and general literature, but he also formed a significant collection of Australiana, largely through the Melbourne bookseller George Robertson.

⁴⁹ While undertaking his historical research and writing, JB Walker concurrently compiled a personal collection of ‘colonial books and pamphlets’, which he took considerable care and pleasure in organising. Walker’s obituary noted that he ‘possessed one of the finest libraries of works relating to Australia and Tasmania’: *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, for the years 1898-1899*, p. lix.

⁵⁰ See T Marshall, ‘Allport, Crowther and Craig: Three Tasmanian collectors and the State Library of Tasmania’, unpublished conference paper, Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, Melbourne, 2004, courtesy of the author; and T Marshall, ‘“The choosing of a proper hobby”: Sir William Crowther and his library’, *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, pp. 405-17.

⁵¹ R Ely, ‘Sights and sounds of Hobart during the 1860s and 1870s: a townsman remembers’, *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, p. 76.

owned by local surgeon and entrepreneur William Lodewyk Crowther.⁵² Walker junior was raised by his mother, 'a very religious woman' who was 'very strict with her son'.⁵³ He 'owed it to [his mother's] influence that he studied closely & won scholarships'.⁵⁴ Walker won his first scholarship at the age of twelve, allowing him to attend the prominent Hutchins School in Hobart. At Hutchins he received one of the best educations available in the colony, and developed the 'mathematical interests' that would translate into a career in engineering.⁵⁵ At the end of his secondary schooling, Walker achieved the second place in the matriculation for Melbourne University. On 5 December 1882 Walker married Mary Ann Lumsden, of Elgin Cottage, Hobart, at the Hobart Memorial Congregational Church. He was awarded the Certificate of Engineering from the University of Melbourne in March 1883.

In January 1884, Walker returned to Tasmania to join the Lands and Works Department.⁵⁶ Like many other Tasmanians in the period, Walker profited substantially from the Tasmanian mining boom. He resigned from the Lands and Works Department in 1889 to become a partner in the firm of TA Reynolds & Co in November 1889, responsible for the construction of the railway line from Zeehan to Strahan on Tasmania's West Coast. By the time the railway was completed in early 1892, at age thirty-one, Walker was wealthy enough to retire

⁵² The Anglo-Australian Guano Company was partly owned by William Lodewyk Crowther (1817-1885), father of William ELH Crowther (1887-1981). WL Crowther established the company in 1861, using his whaling fleet to explore suitable guano-bearing islands in dry tropical areas after exploiting the small deposits around Tasmania. The *Isabella* was also involved in the regular shipping service Crowther established between Hobart Town and Dunedin, New Zealand, conveying diggers and supplies for the Otago gold rush, and later troops for the Maori War. Crowther sold his shares in the company in 1865 for over £10,000. See WELH Crowther, 'The development of the guano trade from Hobart Town in the fifties and sixties', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, 1939, pp. 213-20. William ELH Crowther was to develop an association with William Walker Jnr, sharing a similar passion for Tasmanian history and books, and like Walker, donating his collection to the Tasmanian Public Library (then the State Library of Tasmania).

⁵³ Caroline Walker, notes, (n.d.) Walker family, Tasmania.

⁵⁴ Ibid.

⁵⁵ Ibid. Hutchins aimed to deliver a strong moral (liberal and classical) education. Tradition and history were central to the school ethos, as was academic success. Mrs Walker's serious attitude to her son's schooling, and her desire to lift his social status through education, matched the school's philosophy well. See GH Stephens, *The Hutchins School, Macquarie Street years, 1846-1965*, Hobart, 1979.

⁵⁶ 'Mr. William Walker link with West Coast', *Mercury* (Hobart), 19 May 1933, p. 11.

permanently.⁵⁷ E Morris Miller observed that Walker's 'investments did him well and he acquired an independent living from them'.⁵⁸ He maintained his independent financial status for the rest of his life by trading shares, participating in property ventures, and private money lending,⁵⁹ surviving the crash of the banks in 1891 and the depression that followed. Walker travelled with his wife to Europe, twice, in 1892 and 1912, and to New Zealand in 1917. It is possible that given his interest in New Zealandiana, Walker took the opportunity to visit the Hocken Library in Dunedin. An inveterate student, Walker continued his formal education at Melbourne University in 1893 to gain his Bachelor of Civil Engineering, and at the University of Tasmania 'as a hobby',⁶⁰ gaining a Bachelor of Arts in 1897 and a Bachelor of Science in 1898.⁶¹ Walker was one of the University of Tasmania's first graduates: the university had only been established in 1890, with its first three lecturers appointed in 1893.⁶² Walker maintained his academic contacts throughout his life, as he later undertook examining for the Public Examinations Board in Tasmania.⁶³

In his latter years, Reynolds and Giordano describe Walker as 'a bearded white-haired, benign old gentleman with a facial tic and a stammer' and a very high-pitched voice, spending much of his time 'playing cards with his cronies' and having an 'endless stock of ribald stories'.⁶⁴ Miller described him as 'a plain

⁵⁷ Walker also inherited shares from his mother, who left her son property in Brisbane Street, Hobart, seven Union Bank of Australia Ltd. shares, and four shares in the profitable Western Tasmanian tin mining endeavour at Mount Bischoff: William Walker, notebook 'Private', Allport Manuscripts, box 46, folder 11, State Library of Tasmania (hereafter SLT).

⁵⁸ EM Miller to JK Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection (box 11, no MS number), State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV).

⁵⁹ Walker lent substantial sums of money to individuals, accruing interest on the loans at a rate of 5 per cent per annum: 'Schedule 2' of the statement of assets of his Estate in 1933 indicates loans to eleven individuals or companies, totalling £9,132 and accruing over £450 per year.

⁶⁰ 'Mr. William Walker link with West Coast', *Mercury*, 19 May 1933, p. 11.

⁶¹ Walker was on occasion incorrectly credited as a Master of Arts by contemporaries.

⁶² The first available Bachelor degrees were granted in Arts and Science, and students were 'mainly such as desired to become teachers, lawyers, [and] theologians': EM Miller, 'Notes on the history of the University of Tasmania' (m.s.), Special and Rare Materials Collection, M.9, University of Tasmanian Library (hereafter UTL), Hobart.

⁶³ Walker papers in the Clifford Craig Collection, Queen Victoria Museum and Art Gallery, included a letter regarding Walker's appointment as an examiner in 1917: 'Clifford Craig Collection Held by the Queen Victoria Museum (Draft)' n.d. B.3/66. This collection is no longer extant, though the contents list for the collection remains.

⁶⁴ J Reynolds and M Giordano, *Countries of the mind: the biographical journey of Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964)*, Hobart, 1985, pp. 88-89.

simple man, unaffected by the glamour of publicity. Beyond the fact that he was bearded, he would be passed by unnoticed.'⁶⁵



William Walker at 51 years of age. Photograph taken at Adelphi Studios on The Strand in London, 1912. (Walker family, Tasmania)

⁶⁵ EM Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV. The Walker Collection', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 6, 1954, p. 24.

In 1933 Walker became ill with prostate cancer. He made his final will on 1 May 1933, and spent his last weeks in the Hobart Private Hospital.⁶⁶ Walker died on 17 May, at the age of 73 years. Present at the funeral were representatives of the Tasmanian Public Library, including the Vice-President of the trustees WA Woods (Miller was 'indisposed' and did not attend); Alderman S Crisp, and librarian James Douglas Archer Collier (Taylor's successor); the Town Clerk WA Brain; Clive Lord, curator at the Tasmanian Museum, and Nevin Hurst, representing the Lands and Works Department. Book collectors William Crowther (who was also Walker's physician), lawyer Henry Allport, and William Fuller (who valued Walker's book collection for his Estate) also attended. Crowther and Allport were, like Walker, to become major donors to the Tasmanian Public Library (then the State Library of Tasmania) in the 1960s.⁶⁷

By 1933, the year of his death, Walker owned shares in twenty-six companies, including the Hobart Gas Company and the Mount Lyell Railway and Mining Company, his shares amounting to over £19,000 in total. He held Australian Consolidated Stock and various debentures to the value of nearly £10,000 per year.⁶⁸ The balance of his assets in his Estate at his death totaled £39,205.⁶⁹ To put Walker's financial position and opportunity to philanthropic largesse in perspective with David Scott Mitchell, the latter had endowed the trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales with £70,000, and had spent £80,000 acquiring his Australiana collection up to 1900. Walker was diligent in translating a portion of his wealth, and the vast majority of his collection, into civic wealth through his philanthropy, but was never in the same financial league as Mitchell. It is also important to remember that even Mitchell, who stands out in Australian collecting history as the bibliophile most able to spend large sums for rare

⁶⁶ Notes by Caroline Walker, Walker family.

⁶⁷ For further description of the Walker philanthropy and collections see H Gaunt, "'To do things for the good of others': library philanthropy, William Walker, and the establishment of the Australiana collection at the Tasmanian Public Library in the 1920s and 1930s", *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, pp. 251-64; and H Gaunt, 'Mr Walker's books, or, how the Tasmanian Public Library founded a collection and forgot a donor', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2007, pp. 107-27.

⁶⁸ William Walker, notebook (n.d.), Walker family.

⁶⁹ Walker's Proved Will documented the gross value of the will to be £39,861, and duty paid £4,983.11.9. The book collection that remained in his home at his death accounted for £250 of these assets.

purchases, does not compare in wealth with book collectors in Britain and the United States of America. As Kirsop notes, Australian collectors ‘were not and could not be counterparts of Huntington and Pierpont Morgan, a point that is vital in appraising collecting achievements’.⁷⁰

Walker’s bibliophilic and philanthropic motivations

Walker’s intellectual coming of age and early professional life in the 1880s and 1890s occurred in an era that has been described by Michael Roe as one of ‘extraordinary ferment for European culture and intellect’.⁷¹ At the University of Melbourne, with friends, at public lectures, and particularly through books, Walker absorbed the temper of times, caught perpetually in the tension of marrying his entrenched religiosity and constitutionally rational outlook with the power of the non-rational and the new ‘vitalism’. He was intellectually omnivorous, and his mantra, as he wrote to his fiancée in 1884, was the cultivation of ‘our high powers to the best of our knowledge’.⁷² Intense and introverted, Walker was prone to periods of depression.

Studying for his engineering qualification at the University in Melbourne, Walker noted that he had his ‘first serious doubts about the Bible’. He gave ‘the subject every attention’, ‘faced every difficulty’, ‘shirked nothing’, and attended several ‘free-thought lectures’.⁷³ Walker ‘changed religion’ to his university friends’ consternation, though it is clear that he did not conform to any specific creed in his later life. Walker was particularly impressed by the preaching of Melbourne clergyman Charles Strong, an idealist who challenged the precepts of the Presbyterian Church and was outspoken in his condemnation of social ills. Strong ‘taught that Christianity was more endangered by theological obscurantism than by critical historical investigation, natural science or biblical criticism’, and also

⁷⁰ Kirsop, ‘Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia’, p.78.

⁷¹ M Roe, *Nine Australian progressives: vitalism in bourgeois social thought, 1890-1960*, St. Lucia, Qld, 1984, p. 1. Roe provides a rich description of the social and intellectual milieu of the period. His chapter on E Morris Miller is of particular value in the context of Walker’s development, given Miller and Walker had a lasting friendship.

⁷² William Walker to Mary Ann Lumsden, 12 November 1884, Walker family.

⁷³ William Walker, letter fragment, probably to Mary Ann Lumsden, (n.d. but probably mid-1880s), Walker family.

considered that the failure to address social problems was ‘more serious than doctrinal doubt’.⁷⁴ Walker wrote in 1884: ‘I disbelieve in the efficacy of any form of ceremony but think religion should be a practical thing — a life’.⁷⁵ In *A search for knowledge* (1889) Australian Alfred Naylor Pearson wrote that ‘[s]ome years ago I broke away from the tradition and teachings of everyone, and went out into the wilderness, the darkness, the “Everlasting No”, of scepticism... This step was not taken presumptuously; on the contrary, it involved an agonisingly painful struggle’. Like most ‘thinking men and women of the present generation’, Pearson wrote, ‘I realised that I was born in an age of perplexity’.⁷⁶ These words, in a book in Walker’s own collection, suggest something of the turmoil Walker himself experienced.

Walker read widely and avidly, like many of his generation.⁷⁷ In his extant letters (concentrated in the period of the 1870s and 1880s) Walker expressed great engagement with the literature he consumed. This engagement consistently turned on religion, philosophy and — increasingly — the literature and history of his native land. The latter interest came to be a powerful motivation for his collecting practice, and eventually his philanthropy to the Tasmanian Public Library. Other clues to motivation emerge from Walker’s reading. In the mid-1880s, Walker wrote to Mary Ann that his encounter with Thomas Carlyle’s *On Heroes, hero-*

⁷⁴ CR Badger, ‘Strong, Charles (1844-1942)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060227b.htm?hilit=strong%3Bcharles>, accessed 1/10/2009. Strong was also admired by nationalist politician Alfred Deakin, and Melbourne Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery philanthropist, Alfred Felton. Walker wrote of Strong’s ‘excellence’ as a preacher (Walker family papers), and also possessed some of his publications, including *Christianity re-interpreted and other sermons* (Melbourne, 1894).

⁷⁵ William Walker to Mary Ann Lumsden, 13 May 1884, Walker family. Walker became attracted to Christian Science in his latter years as his health deteriorated, and transcribed many newspaper articles relating to spirituality and religion. A large portion of these notes relate to Mary Baker Eddy, the founder of Christian Science in North America, and testimonies of the efficacy of the Science on Australian adherents suffering illness. See William Walker, notebooks, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W3/1, UTL, Hobart.

⁷⁶ AN Pearson, *A Search for Knowledge*, Melbourne, 1889, p. 1. Walker was not isolated in his questioning of received religious values. Jill Roe has suggested that ‘in Australia, where religious ideas have often been given short shrift, it seems clear that a significant proportion of the colonial intelligentsia found its way into minority or “alternative” religious positions in the latter half of the nineteenth century’: J Roe, ‘“Testimonies from the field”: the coming of Christian Science to Australia c. 1890-1910’, *Journal of Religious History*, vol. 22, no. 3, 1998, p. 307.

⁷⁷ For a general description of this type of reading, particularly radical reading practices, see B Scates, *A new Australia: citizenship, radicalism and the First Republic*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997, p. 38.

worship, & the heroic in history (1841) had been singular. Reading the volume was an epiphany that 'settled [him] a good deal'.⁷⁸ A romantic idealist, Carlyle was highly influential in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁷⁹ Carlyle's spiritualism and adherence to the centrality of the performance of duty as the principal aim of life resonated with Walker. Although it is impossible to know exactly what Walker gained from his reading of Carlyle, it is not too far-fetched to suggest that his doubts about conventional religion followed, via Carlyle, to a 'religion' of the book. In Carlyle's essay 'The hero as man of letters' books are assigned a religious role as a 'method of worship'.⁸⁰ Carlyle suggested that in 'Books lies the *soul* of the whole Past Time; the articulate audible voice of the Past'. He also explicitly articulated the transformative power of books, suggesting that they 'accomplish miracles... They persuade men.'⁸¹ Here may have been the seeds of Walker's future bibliographic philanthropy: a replacement of traditional religion with a quasi-mystical faith in the transformative power of literature, and the possibility of raising these beliefs into noble philanthropic action in the manner of a true hero.

Carlyle's promotion in these essays of the 'great man theory of history'⁸² is of interest in the context of Walker's and his contemporaries' perception of Australian history. Graeme Davison has suggested that historically 'Australians are not a people much given to hero-worship', particularly compared with Britons or Americans.⁸³ Walker's example seems to gainsay this view, in his deep attraction to heroes and the heroic. Walker absorbed the paradigm of the heroic through his reading, and sought his heroes in the historiography of discoverers, explorers, and pioneers of Australia. Miller, who was active in encouraging Walker's philanthropy to the Tasmanian Public Library, and well versed himself

⁷⁸ William Walker, letter fragment, probably to Mary Ann Lumsden, (n.d., probably mid-1880s), Walker family. The Tasmanian Public Library had a copy of Carlyle's *On heroes, hero-worship, & the heroic in history* listed in its catalogue from 1871, although Walker probably purchased his own copy.

⁷⁹ Michael K Goldberg, 'Introduction' in T Carlyle, M Engel, JJ Brattin and MK Goldberg, *On heroes, hero-worship, & the heroic in history*, Berkeley, 1993, p. lxiv.

⁸⁰ Carlyle, *On heroes, hero-worship, & the heroic in history*, pp. 140-41.

⁸¹ Carlyle, *On heroes, hero-worship, & the heroic in history*, p. 138.

⁸² Goldberg, 'Introduction', p. lxv.

⁸³ G Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history*, St. Leonards, NSW, 2000, p. 139.

in Idealist philosophy through his research and publications on Immanuel Kant, understood Walker's impulse. Miller wrote perceptively of Walker that he was 'devoted to his State and its cultural institutions, and treasured its history as a record of men of achievement. Through his book collecting he sought to commemorate their works.'⁸⁴

Walker was also influenced by other major collectors and compilers of Australiana, particularly DS Mitchell, in whose collections he spent large periods of time after 1910. Walker owned catalogues and descriptions of the Melbourne and Sydney public libraries, including the *Australasian bibliography (in three parts): catalogue of books in the Free Public Library, Sydney, relating to, or published in Australasia ... 1869-1888* (1893),⁸⁵ an 'Australia, Tasmania, and New Zealand Works List' from the Melbourne Public Library (n.d.), and the *Catalogue of the books, pamphlets, pictures, and maps in the library of Parliament to September 1911*. Descriptive accounts of public library collections in Walker's library included Frank Bladen's *Public Library of New South Wales: historical notes commemorative of the building of the Mitchell wing* (1906), and *The life and times of Sir George Grey* (1892) by WL Rees and Lily Rees in which he would have read about Grey's bibliographic and philanthropic activities.⁸⁶

In his copy of CW Holgate's *An account of the chief libraries of Australia and Tasmania* (1886) Walker was exposed to Holgate's critical reflection on the poverty of the Australiana collection in the Tasmanian Public Library, while his copies of Anthony Trollope's *Victoria and Tasmania* (1874) also contained descriptions of the public libraries in these colonies.⁸⁷ In terms of authoritative bibliographic aids in the relatively new field of Tasmaniana, Walker acquired James Fenton's *A history of Tasmania from its discovery in 1642 to the present time* (1884), which included as an appendix a bibliography of Australiana

⁸⁴ Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 24.

⁸⁵ George Mackaness considered this 1,235 page, 3 volume catalogue the most important 'official documentary' bibliography of Australiana for collectors in guiding the formation of private collections: G Mackaness, *Bibliomania: an Australian book collector's essays*, Sydney, 1965, p. 5.

⁸⁶ Walker also had a copy of CS Ross' *Francis Ormond: pioneer, patriot, philanthropist* (1912), a biography of one of the most prominent Victorian liberal educational philanthropists.

⁸⁷ Walker had multiple copies of Trollope's description of the Australian colonies.

compiled by James Backhouse Walker.⁸⁸ E Morris Miller's *Libraries and Education* (1912) would have given Walker an understanding of progressive library theory and the importance of encouraging wide access to literature across the community. James Bonwick's *An octogenarian's reminiscences* (1902) offered Walker an edifying narrative about the historian's unrelenting efforts to transcribe the archives in the Public Record Office in Britain to supply the material for new histories of Australia.

Walker as annalist

Rachel Barrowman has described bibliophile TM Hocken as 'an annalist, enthusiastically engaged upon ... "the assemblage and assimilation of accurate facts"'.⁸⁹ Barrowman has suggested that Hocken's motivation was that of a historian, in contrast to the other key collector of New Zealandiana, Alexander Turnbull, who was motivated by bibliophilia.⁹⁰ To substantiate the difference, Barrowman points to Hocken's propensity to collect manuscripts and his satisfaction with copies and lesser-quality editions of books, compared to Turnbull who 'sought first editions and rare specimens'.⁹¹ Like Hocken, Walker was an annalist, generally more interested in the textual content than the artefact itself. Miller observed that 'on local events [Walker] was amazingly accurate'.⁹² He recorded facts, and collected reportage of events, in his scrapbooks and notebooks, rather than offering his own opinion or constructing a history of the data. He was fascinated by genealogy (his own family history and that of other Tasmanian families) and local facts and events, which he compiled into chronologically, organised notebooks. He consolidated his magpie-like scholarship in multiple volumes of contemporary newspaper clippings, whose

⁸⁸ J Fenton, *A history of Tasmania from its discovery in 1642 to the present time*, Hobart; Launceston, 1884.

⁸⁹ Barrowman notes that Hocken was not inspired by the 'dry record' but rather the "romance" and "singular charm" of the colony's early story': Barrowman, 'A labour of love', p. 12. EH McCormick first described Hocken as a 'local annalist and antiquarian' in 1961 in McCormick, *The fascinating folly*, p. 35.

⁹⁰ Turnbull is the better remembered New Zealand book collector, who left his vast collection of historical and heritage material to the New Zealand nation to found the Alexander Turnbull Library in Wellington in 1918. See R Barrowman, *The Turnbull: a library and its world*, Auckland, NZ, 1995.

⁹¹ Barrowman, 'A labour of love', p. 13.

⁹² Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 24.

contents ranged from early exploration, settlement, and bushrangers to public houses and local architecture.⁹³

The compilation of newspaper cuttings books, a ‘reworking and re-imagining’ of media material common in the early twentieth century, reflects a particular aspect of active and creative reading.⁹⁴ Peter Fritzsche has described the phenomenon of scrap-booking and the cultivation of (particularly family) memories in late nineteenth-century Europe as a type of ‘cartography’ of personal narratives.⁹⁵ He considers this as evidence of a thirst for memory, and a deeply suspicious view of the work of time. ‘Without memories and the ability to name and designate’, Fritzsche suggests, ‘people as much as nations stood to lose their subjectivity and hence their power’.⁹⁶ In the hands of collectors such as Walker (and William Dixon, who was also a scrap-booker) this practice was an additional tool in the annalists’ kit, compiling and presenting the national and local, as well as personal.⁹⁷ Their scrap-booking demonstrates the application of historical mindedness to the everyday. The act of selection and compilation assigned status and legitimacy not only to the fragments themselves, but also to the historical narrative to which they contributed.

Walker’s annalist tendencies led him to the British Museum in 1912, where he researched early Tasmanian literature and manuscripts,⁹⁸ and to the Mitchell Library, in which he spent ‘a good deal of time’⁹⁹ on annual visits.¹⁰⁰ In the

⁹³ Some of these volumes are extant in the State Library of Tasmania collections. Others are held in the Special and Rare Materials Collection, UTL, Hobart. Walker’s notebooks were considered collector’s items after his death, and were acquired by collectors such as Clifford Craig and WELH Crowther.

⁹⁴ M Lyons and L Taksa, *Australian readers remember: an oral history of reading 1890-1930*, Melbourne, 1992, p. 127.

⁹⁵ P Fritzsche, *Stranded in the present: modern time and the melancholy of history*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, p. 182.

⁹⁶ Fritzsche, *Stranded in the present*, p. 191.

⁹⁷ Dixon, as Anne Robertson has observed, was an inveterate compiler of newspaper cuttings and ‘maker of lists’, of books, people, names, and dates: Anne Robertson, *Treasures of the State Library of New South Wales*, Sydney, 1988, p. 108.

⁹⁸ Walker’s researches in the British Museum are discussed further in Chapter 5.

⁹⁹ ‘Sydney’s Mitchell Library’, *Mercury*, 5 March 1920, p. 2.

¹⁰⁰ Brian Fletcher notes that the Mitchell Library from its inception had become ‘a new focal point ... where contact could be made between all those interested in Australia’s past and culture. The Mitchell quickly acquired human attributes and existed not simply as a collection of books but as a

Mitchell Library, Walker read original manuscripts and books that he was unable to find elsewhere. It was Walker's 'custom to laboriously copy by hand interesting information in early newspapers, M.S. documents and pamphlets, and complete in this way imperfect items in his collection', WELH Crowther observed.¹⁰¹ Extant transcriptions made by Walker include portions of Robert Knopwood's diary, David Burn's *Van Diemen's Land, moral, physical, and political* from the *Colonial Magazine*, and *A convicts recollection of NSW Written by himself* from the *London Magazine*.¹⁰² A number of the notebooks are in a series relating to a particular topic or book, such as *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*. Others show evidence of being compiled over a lengthy period, as Walker transcribed new information from different sources.¹⁰³ Walker (like James Backhouse Walker before him) developed a fascination with the Tasmanian surveyor and amateur historian James Erskine Calder, whose notebooks were held by the Mitchell Library.

In his decades of collecting Walker established a reputation as a 'studious gentleman' and a specialist in the history of Tasmania. Miller reported that Walker 'acquired an extensive knowledge of [his books'] contents'.¹⁰⁴ The *Mercury* opined that 'there is no man living in Tasmania who is better qualified to speak of the riches and the resources of [the Mitchell Library] than Mr. William Walker'.¹⁰⁵ He established a mutually respectful relationship with Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright, acting as an informal agent seeking to procure volumes for the Mitchell Library on at least one occasion.¹⁰⁶ His reputation as an expert in the field of Australiana and Tasmaniana was solidified in library and bookshop circles after his donations to the Tasmanian Public Library in the early 1920s. In

centre for intellectual life': BH Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, Kensington, NSW, 1993, p. 62.

¹⁰¹ WELH Crowther, 'Notes and final draft of a paper on book collecting', (m.s.), William Crowther Collection, SLT.

¹⁰² William Walker, notebooks, Allport Manuscripts, box 46, SLT.

¹⁰³ Walker's notebook of the Robert Knopwood's diary is a prime example of this. William Walker, notebook 'Reverend Knopwood's diary', Allport Manuscripts, box 46, folder 9, SLT.

¹⁰⁴ Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 24.

¹⁰⁵ 'Sydney's Mitchell Library', *Mercury*, 5 March 1920, p. 2.

¹⁰⁶ Walker approached Tasmanian author and artist Mabel Hookey in 1911 requesting her to sell her volume of the Reverend Robert Knopwood's diary to the Mitchell Library: William Walker to Hugh Wright, 1 May 1911, ML AS 91/2, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

1928, librarian JDA Collier wrote to invite Walker to the library to 'look over' the cards that had been typed in preparation for Sir John Quick's *Australian Bibliography*, to check for factual errors or omissions. Collier also called upon Walker's expertise with significant parts of his collection such as the Tasmanian incunabulum *Quintus Servinton* and other rarities.¹⁰⁷

In the absence of private letters from the last decades of his life, it is difficult to establish the degree of intercourse Walker had with other private collectors in Hobart and elsewhere, or to what extent he shared his expertise, although he certainly had an association with bibliophile WELH Crowther, who was also Walker's personal physician. He developed a lasting friendship with Miller: Reynolds and Giordano note that Miller was 'fascinated by this erudite man and his knowledge of Australian books. Whenever he saw him at any public function he always made for his direction.'¹⁰⁸ From around 1924 to 1930, Walker, along with Miller, was a member of the Metaphysics Club, an intellectual group that met at the home in Sandy Bay of invalid Dr Eric Jeffrey. Walker was 'always up to date with his reading'.¹⁰⁹ Walker chose not to join the Royal Society of Tasmania,¹¹⁰ although he did have some intercourse with the institution, as a book collector and Tasmaniana expert, and owned the 1885 catalogue of the Royal Society Library. He arranged in June 1914 for an exchange of a duplicate copy of *History of Austral-Asia...* by R Montgomery Martin (1836) in the Royal Society

¹⁰⁷ Collier asked if Walker 'happen[ed] to know the author of 'Quintus Servinton' or are able to look it up, we should be very glad of the information': JDA Collier to William Walker, 5 July 1928, SLT1/1/11, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart. In 1931 Walker was consulted about an octavo pamphlet 'published by Bent about May 12th 1826 written by J.T. Gellibrand ... showing up the proceedings against him by Col. Arthur and Mr. Stephen': JDA Collier to William Walker, 31 March 1931, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart. Even a decade after his death Walker was still the expert voice on this important Tasmanian book: in 1944, when a research query regarding *Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* was addressed to the then State Librarian Collier, Collier supplied information 'according to the late William Walker': JDA Collier to BJ Cronly, 19 July 1944, inserted in the compiled newspaper clippings volume of *Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* made by William Walker, SLT.

¹⁰⁸ Reynolds and Giordano, *Countries of the mind*, pp. 88-89.

¹⁰⁹ The Club 'received its stimulation from Einstein's break-through with his theory of relativity and its universal applications. Each member undertook to read up a newly-publicised development in scientific thought, philosophy and metaphysics, reading a brief paper on the subject when called upon': Reynolds and Giordano, *Countries of the mind*, pp. 99-100.

¹¹⁰ The Royal Society at this time was an exclusive, but not small, association: at the end of 1932, in Walker's last year of life, there were 266 members listed in the *Papers and Proceedings*. It is curious, given his concurrent interests and association with James Watt Beattie, and later WELH Crowther, that he did not join, and possibly illustrates his strong disinclination to mix in society.

Library, for books from his own collection, including *Godwin's emigrant's guide to Van Diemen's Land...* (1823) and Melville's *Van Diemen's Land almanack* (1833).¹¹¹ In 1922 he presented a list of 'early sketches and portraits relating to Tasmania compiled ... while in Sydney' (presumably at the Mitchell Library) to the reformed Historical Section of the Royal Society.¹¹² Without regular contact in historical forums such as the Royal Society, Walker fed his interest and expertise in local history through print, acquiring the publications of other amateur historians, and the papers of historical societies.¹¹³

Walker as hoarder

Miller wrote that '[t]he collecting instinct was deeply ingrained'¹¹⁴ in Walker, and described his collecting style publicly as 'not indiscriminate', noting that he was 'skilled in book selection after the manner of a competent librarian'.¹¹⁵ In private, Miller considered that Walker 'had not the love of books that was the bibliophile's. He enjoyed the fact of possession. He liked hoarding.'¹¹⁶ By the end of his life Walker's 'inordinate collecting had got beyond his ability to control what he possessed': his collection of some 7000 volumes were piled 'knee deep'¹¹⁷ into the upper rooms of his Hobart residence.¹¹⁸ In Wallace Kirsop's distinction between 'episodic or opportunistic manifestations of bibliophily' and 'systematic book-hunting of the most refined and exquisite kind' in book collectors, Walker would fall more obviously into the former category.¹¹⁹

¹¹¹ Royal Society Library Accession Catalogue, vol. I, (Books in Library 1913), Special and Rare Materials Collection, RSA/G/4(1), UTL, Hobart.

¹¹² Minutes of meeting of the Historical, Geographical and Ethnological Section, Royal Society, 16 August 1922, Special and Rare Materials Collection, RSA/H/1, UTL, Hobart. It was suggested that: 'this list should be added to by every member and by all possible means, so that the Society would be in possession of a list of portraits relating to early Tasmania, with an intimation where they were to be found. When such a list was complete it might be possible to obtain copies of these sketches and portraits for permanent inclusion in the records of the Society.'

¹¹³ Walker acquired JB Walker's *Early Tasmania: papers read before the Royal Society of Tasmania during the years 1888 to 1899* (1902), the papers of the Australian Historical Association from 1901 (when it was first formed in Melbourne) to 1920, and the *Transactions of the Historical Society of Australasia* (1885).

¹¹⁴ EM Miller to JK Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection, box 11, SLV.

¹¹⁵ Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 24.

¹¹⁶ Miller to Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection, box 11, SLV.

¹¹⁷ WELH Crowther, 'Notes and final draft of a paper on book collecting, notably the formation of his own collection', Crowther pamphlets, SLT, Hobart.

¹¹⁸ 'Public Library. Mrs. W. Walker's gift', *Mercury*, 5 September 1933, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ Kirsop, 'Collecting books in nineteenth-century Australia: individuals and libraries', p. 78.

Walker began the formation of a personal library in his early twenties. This library was initially focused on 'scientific books', related to natural history and science. He took care to collect only 'good books', writing to his fiancée Mary Ann in 1884 that in his 'study' one might 'find some rubbish but such books I have obtained either through mistake or as a sample of a certain class of books or for some special reason'.¹²⁰ His early collection was wider than science: he had '[Ralph Waldo] Emerson lying about somewhere', and fiction by Charles Lamb.¹²¹ Walker browsed in the new and second-hand bookstores and auction houses on the mainland during his university days, and in Hobart on his return. He made the discovery of the extremely rare three volume Tasmanian novel by Henry Savery, *Quintus Servinton* (1830/31), in the early 1880s from Abbott's Auction Mart in Hobart.¹²² For the next five decades he spent 'much of his spare time delving among the dust-covered articles in second-hand shops and marts in Hobart in search of books and papers by Tasmanian and Australian writers'.¹²³ On his annual trip to Sydney after 1911, Walker became 'persona grata at all the old booksellers there', and 'added to his collection upon every trip'.¹²⁴ In contrast to fellow Tasmanian collector Robert Sticht, who maintained relationships with a few select dealers, Walker enjoyed the thrill of the hunt, and the physical scrounging.¹²⁵

Walker was inclined to glue relevant newspaper clippings to the inside covers of some of his books, or to acquire volumes with such additions. The majority of his books were acquired second hand. Some were cancelled public library books from

¹²⁰ William Walker to Mary Ann Lumsden, 7 January 1884, Walker family. By a 'certain class' Walker may have been referring to the beginning of his collection of erotica and banned books (see footnote 150).

¹²¹ Walker family, Tasmania.

¹²² C Hadgraft, 'Biographical introduction', in C Hadgraft (ed.), *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, University of Queensland Press, 1964, p. 9. Hadgraft states that Walker 'obtained his copy of Quintus at Abbott's Auction Mart, in Collins St., for about 1/6, circa 1880'. A document (F522) in the Cecil Hadgraft papers relating to Henry Savery in the Fryer Library, University of Queensland, confirms that this information was supplied to Hadgraft by William Crowther, who heard it directly from Walker. Crowther makes an alternative suggestion in an audio interview made c.1974 that Quintus was found in the auction room of William A Guesdon (in Collins Street, Hobart). See WELH Crowther, '"My collections": Three interviews with Ken Gilmore', digital audio copy of original television interviews c. 1974, Brian Rieusset, Hobart, 2006.

¹²³ 'Value of hobbies', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

¹²⁴ 'Gift to the Library. Valuable collection of books', *Mercury*, 31 October 1923, p. 3.

¹²⁵ See Gaunt, 'The Library of Robert Carl Sticht'.

interstate or overseas, others (particularly fiction titles) had done the traps in local and mainland circulating libraries, others again carried the signatures of previous owners.¹²⁶ Walker did not collect manuscripts, limiting his purchases to published works. This was a distinct departure from the practice of Mitchell, and suggests that Walker's emulation of the older collector was not wholesale. Walker's extensive use of the Mitchell Library collection of manuscripts may have simultaneously fulfilled his need to access original material for its content, and confirmed his disinclination to acquire such papers himself.

He was not typically an annotator, and signed very few of his books. He did sign one volume of the three-volume set of Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton*, which was arguably the most significant and valuable part of the whole collection, an 'Australian incunabulum'.¹²⁷ He signed and dated his copy of *Tales of Tasmania, or Adventures of an emigrant*, by Charles Rowcroft, an abridged edition of *Tales of the Colonies*, published in Hobart in 1887 and purchased new by Walker. In 1894 he purchased and signed Charles Strong's recently published *Christianity re-interpreted and other sermons* (Melbourne: George Robertson & Co., 1894). Walker also signed his copy of François Péron's *A voyage of discovery to the southern hemisphere, performed by order of the Emperor Napoleon, during the years 1801, 1802, 1803, and 1804* (English translation edition of 1809). These signed titles reflect Walker's key collecting themes: convict history, exploration history, descriptions of Tasmania, and religious tracts and sermons.¹²⁸

¹²⁶ *Chidiack Tickbourne or the Catholic conspiracy*, by Marcus Clarke, for example, was formerly part of Eaton's Book Exchange (154 Liverpool Street, Hobart) and Pill's Book Exchange (152 Liverpool Street, Hobart). *Town and bush* by Nat Gould passed through the hands of LR Mann, dealer in 'Novels and Novelettes, bought and sold, any quantity' in Melbourne, and another book exchange in Bourke Street, Melbourne. Some of Walker's books were purchased as cancelled library books. His copy of Herman Melville's *Omoo* (1893 edition) was from the collection of the Public Library of New South Wales, while Walker's copy of George William Evans' *A geographical historical and topographical description of Van Diemen's Land* (1822) was formerly in the collection of the South Devon Library, UK. Others came from prominent private collections, such as Charles Rowcroft's *An emigrant in search of a colony* (1851) acquired by Walker after it had been in the collection of James Edge-Partington, Pacific ethnologist.

¹²⁷ Mackaness, *The art of book collecting in Australia*, p. 75.

¹²⁸ Miller noted of Walker that his 'Australian collecting was confined mainly to works of travel, description, and history. The literary side was confined almost to convictism and the writings of Tasmanians or of authors who wrote on the Tasmanian subjects': Miller to Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection, box 11, SLV.

Walker also collected Australian popular and ephemeral fiction, particularly in his last decade. Walker acquired copies of the illustrated literary monthly *The Lone Hand* (dating from the period 1907 to 1913) in which he could sample the work of many of Australia's foremost and rising authors. His most unusual acquisitions to his collection were the New South Wales Bookstall Series, of which he collected forty-two titles. This series was established around 1903, and ran to some 250 paperback titles in the twenty years of production. As Carol Mills has written, the Bookstall novels were extremely popular, their sale price of a shilling making them accessible to the working class reader.¹²⁹ Walker purchased many of the fiction titles second-hand in a soiled state from commercial circulating libraries and exchanges. These purchases demonstrate Walker's tolerance for less than 'fine' condition, although it would in any case have been hard to find ephemeral novels in a fine state. As Mills has noted, these books were fragile, and never meant to last: survival of these titles has 'been in the hands of collectors'.¹³⁰

Walker's assiduous compilation of Australian fiction, including the ephemeral bookstall novels, was a significant and unusual aspect of his collecting practice. While Australiana collectors like Robert Sticht, Andrew Inglis Clarke and JB Walker had collected 'canonical' Australian literature such as the nationalist literature of Charles Harpur, Adam Lindsay Gordon, Henry Kendall, and Henry Lawson, they did not acquire the ephemeral fiction that began to emerge at the end of the nineteenth century.¹³¹ In 1956 George Mackaness wrote that to the best of his knowledge (and in ignorance of Walker's activities) 'no Australian collector, except perhaps Professor Morris Miller of Hobart, and Mr JD Holmes QC of Sydney, who managed to secure most, if not all of the hundreds of volumes

¹²⁹ CM Mills, *The New South Wales Bookstall Company as a publisher, with notes on its artists and authors and a bibliography of its publications*, Canberra, 1991, p. 11.

¹³⁰ Ibid. George Mackaness noted in 1956 in his volume *The art of book collecting in Australia*, 'it is very difficult to obtain mint, fine, or even good copies of novels, especially of those that became popular and were much read': Mackaness, *The art of book collecting in Australia*, p. 74.

¹³¹ Sticht acquired a small quantity of Australian novels by authors such as Rolf Boldrewood, and poetry in compilations such as Bertram Stevens' *Golden Treasury of Australian Verse* (1909): See Gaunt, 'The Library of Robert Carl Sticht'. Andrew Inglis Clark was described as a 'pioneer enthusiast for Australian literature and went to considerable trouble to secure copies of ... early writers': J Reynolds, 'The Clarks of "Rosebank"', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, vol. 4, 1960, p. 8.

in the NSW Bookstall Series, has made a speciality of fiction'.¹³² Walker's shift of emphasis in his collecting toward ephemeral Australian fiction was likely to have been a product of his relationship with Miller, who was himself developing an interest in Australian fiction in this period in preparing his *Australian Literature from Its Beginnings to 1935*.¹³³

Roger Cardinal has argued that collecting is 'an existential project that seeks to lend shape to hapless circumstance. To collate and arrange any objects, culturally marked or otherwise, is to invent a space of privileged equilibrium offering at least some respite from the pressures of life'.¹³⁴ It is evident that Australiana collecting and the annalist mentality offered a sphere of private respite in William Walker's life. However, as the following section argues, it also offered a socially legitimate form of leisure that had as its apogee culturally valorised patriotic philanthropy.

Australiana collecting and philanthropy as valorised leisure

In his formative years Walker was influenced by the pervasive socialism in intellectual circles that WA Townsley suggests 'translated loosely into an idealistic search for a better world'.¹³⁵ He became an idealist with a deeply

¹³² Mackaness, *The art of book collecting in Australia*, p. 61. John Dashwood Holmes was a barrister and judge who collected Australiana in the 1930s, a little later than Walker, and compiled a manuscript bibliography on the Federation movement: JK McLaughlin, 'Holmes, John Dashwood (1907-1973)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A140544b.htm?hlite=holmes>, accessed 10 September 2009. Holmes was married for a period to Mackaness' daughter. New Zealand's Alexander Turnbull also acquired local fiction. In EH McCormick's words he 'sought out and paid for the works of New Zealand poets and novelists' for his private collection, an unusual and proactive method of encouraging and collecting national literature (although McCormick suggests that this indiscriminating process meant that 'the Turnbull Library may house the world's most unrelieved concentration of inferior imaginative writing'): McCormick, *The fascinating folly*, p. 28.

¹³³ EM Miller and J Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935: a descriptive and bibliographical survey of books by Australian authors in poetry, drama, fiction, criticism and anthology with subsidiary entries to 1938*, Melbourne, 1940. This will be discussed in detail in Ch. 6. In the absence of many Australian examples, it is instructive to compare Walker with English collector (and writer) Michael Sadleir, who also collected cheap fiction. John Sutherland writes that the 'Sadleir's books were 'rare' enough — not because they were highly valued but because, until he came along, they were not valued at all'. Sadleir gave his fiction collection to the University of California in the USA in 1951. See J Sutherland, 'Michael Sadleir and his collection of nineteenth-century fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Literature*, vol. 56, no. 2, 2001, pp. 145-59.

¹³⁴ R Cardinal, 'Collecting and collage-making: the case of Kurt Schwitters', in J Elsner and R Cardinal (eds.), *The cultures of collecting*, Melbourne, 1994, p. 70.

¹³⁵ WA Townsley, *Tasmania: from colony to statehood 1803-1945*, Hobart, 1991, p. 140.

entrenched sense of civic duty. He wrote to his fiancée Mary Ann in 1884 that '[t]o do good to others is to do good to oneself'.¹³⁶ However, his social difficulties and self-diagnosed 'retiring disposition and a readiness to take offence' limited the options for fulfilling that duty.¹³⁷ 'I often feel that I am very useless to anyone but myself', he wrote in 1884.¹³⁸ It seems likely that in his philanthropy, Walker found a way to 'do good' and simultaneously promote generalised patriotic values in his community. Walker himself never publicly stated the intent behind his philanthropy to the Tasmanian Public Library. However, Mary Ann informed Collier after Walker's death that her late husband had 'sought to increase the reading of Australian books' through his benefaction.¹³⁹ Walker's philanthropy overlayed precepts of nineteenth century philanthropic motivation with new mores stimulated by emergent nationalism. These patriotic inclinations were almost certainly not his primary objective in his early collecting activities, but they became important to him by the time he donated his Australiana to the Tasmanian Public Library.

Walker's collecting and philanthropy were described in the media in terms of productive hobby activity.¹⁴⁰ The *Mercury* observed in 1933, after Walker's posthumous donation:

Nearly everyone has some form of hobby from which much pleasure is obtained during leisure hours, and the value of such occupation cannot be too highly stressed. Many instances there are, even in Tasmania, of occasions on which knowledge thus gained has been turned to useful public purpose, but outstanding is that example...of [William Walker] the founder of the Australian literary section in the Tasmanian library.¹⁴¹

¹³⁶ W Walker to Mary Ann Lumsden, 5 March 1884, Walker family, Tasmania.

¹³⁷ Ibid.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Mary Ann Walker to JDA Collier, 4 August 1933, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁴⁰ See 'Gift to the library. Valuable collection of books', *Mercury*, 31 October 1923, p. 3.

¹⁴¹ 'Value of hobbies', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8. WELH Crowther also characterised his own bibliophilism in the context of hobbies and leisure time, referring to the 'choosing of a proper hobby' for retirement. See Marshall, "'The choosing of a proper hobby': Sir William Crowther and his library'.

The *Mercury* correspondent described how Walker had ‘gradually built up a collection which for worth and monetary value would be of value... Great always was his joy when he had purchased some little-known and almost forgotten work of merit’.¹⁴² The rhetoric reveals several aspects of the social valorisation of Walker’s activities, including Walker’s work in constructing the collection (appropriate use of leisure time), the monetary value accrued (coalescence with the mores of capitalism), the singularity of the collecting activity (identifying and consolidating value in formerly obscure material), and the generalised notion of civic worth (implication of wider social utility).

The *Mercury*’s characterisation of Walker’s bibliophilic and philanthropic activities in the context of hobbies and appropriate use of leisure-time emerges from the wider context of the growing hobby phenomenon. In his monograph *Hobbies: leisure and the culture of work in America*, Stephen Gelber argues that hobbyist activity developed in the late nineteenth century as a way of counteracting a growing ‘fear’ of leisure time in society.¹⁴³ Hobbies were promoted for their value in counteracting inappropriate leisure time activities. Hobbies were legitimised as both benign *and* productive. The twin effects of industrialism (producing a multitude of objects to collect) and capitalism (substantiating an ideology for acquisition) combined, Gelber argues, to make collecting, including book collecting, the ‘premier example of hobby activity’.¹⁴⁴ In the Australian context it is important to recognise the shift in which the indulgence of the bibliophilic urge to collect, in this case Australian books, was increasingly accorded the highest moral value when related to patriotic purposes.¹⁴⁵ In the context of growing nationalism, collecting Australiana bestowed on the collector a certain set of attributes. Collecting Australiana was a

¹⁴² ‘Value of hobbies’, *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

¹⁴³ SM Gelber, *Hobbies: leisure and the culture of work in America*, New York, 1999, p. xi.

¹⁴⁴ Gelber, *Hobbies*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁵ A comparison with this can be seen in Karsten Borgmann’s essay on the American art collectors John Pierpont Morgan and Isabella Stewart Gardner. Gardner and Morgan participated in a ‘status revolution’, taking advantage of a new cosmopolitan community of aesthetes in Boston and New York to indulge their conspicuous consumption of art, affecting ‘the formation of a new exclusive identity for a new national upper class’: K Borgmann, ‘“The glue of civil society”: a comparative approach to art museum philanthropy at the turn of the twentieth century’, in Adam, *Philanthropy, patronage, and civil society*, p. 40.

new field, with few players, in comparison to the acquisition of established 'series' or 'sets' enshrined in the British collecting canon, such as Shakespeariana, or incunabula. In the formation of a collection of Australiana, even everyday documents could possess uniqueness as part of the 'set', which might also include the rare and exemplary. As Gelber argues, by owning this singular set, the collector could share in the 'specialness' of the collected object. Australiana provided singularity, which served the collectors' competitive urge, but was also socially legitimated by its nationalistic nature.

As earlier chapters have argued, the library profession and local historians had started overtly to encourage collecting to stem the tide of destruction and loss of the local and national archive in the late nineteenth century. Book collecting and philanthropy with a national goal was the type of '[a]chievement-generated pleasure from work-like leisure' that reinforces the participant's belief they are 'doing something that is good'.¹⁴⁶ Gelber argues that:

...serious leisure such as helping others as a volunteer, creating something in a hobby, or producing professional results as an amateur are all activities designed to generate feelings of achievement. Indeed, almost all pastimes that are held up for social approbation, with the possible exception of serious reading, are activities that induce pride based on personal effort. Such leisure is socially valorized precisely because it produces feelings of satisfaction with something that looks very much like work but that is done for its own sake.¹⁴⁷

The exploitation of the type of specialised knowledge acquired by Walker in his Australiana collecting was central to the legitimisation of his hobbyist activity in the public eye. Walker's activity was publicly raised by figures at the top of the library and book hierarchy in Tasmania, including Collier, Miller, and Crowther, who singled out factors such as the quality of key parts of the collection, such as Savery's *Quintus Servinton*, for his industry in amassing everyday historical material, and for his generosity to the state.¹⁴⁸

¹⁴⁶ Gelber argues that it was partly the systematic nature of the project of collecting that necessitated the acquisition of specialised knowledge: Gelber, *Hobbies*, p. 12.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Miller (incorrectly) believed that Walker's copy was 'the only copy so far recorded as extant'.

Walter Benjamin has written of the disapprobation afforded bibliophiles in 'Unpacking my library', as the 'distrust of the collector type'.¹⁴⁹ Gelber describes the shame and guilt experienced by collectors under this disapprobation, possibly stemming from collectors' sense that they are violating cultural expectations about the rational work-orientated use of time. Shame associated with collecting, Gelber argues, can be alleviated by the perception that collecting produces social value *and* by the useful exploitation of specialised knowledge. In Walker's case, his use of his hobby time was socially valorised through the application of expertise in collecting as well as the philanthropic outcome. Approbation for his benign and productive hobby activity also effectively occluded awareness of his socially inappropriate acquisition of erotica and banned books, an activity which ran as an undercurrent to his Australiana collecting for many decades.¹⁵⁰

Walker's donations to the Tasmanian Public Library

Andrew Carnegie's bricks-and-mortar philanthropy to the Tasmanian Public Library simultaneously stimulated interest in small-scale book donation to the institution by the local community and consolidated a position of financial penury which lasted for the following four decades. Philanthropic support for the institution continued to be vital. Taylor wrote in the press in 1905 encouraging large-scale philanthropy, noting that:

In England and the colonies many of the public libraries have received handsome bequests, and it is a matter for regret that wealthy residents

Miller saw, as did Ferguson twenty years later when writing the first volume of his *Bibliography of Australia*, that Walker's copy was a particularly fine set. Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 22.

¹⁴⁹ W Benjamin, 'Unpacking my library', in H Arendt (ed.) and H Zohn (trans.), *Illuminations; edited and with an introduction by Hannah Arendt*, London, 1999, p. 68.

¹⁵⁰ Miller was fascinated by this erotica collection, which he discovered in Walker's house after the collector's death. The 'banned books' included volumes from the 'Winning Post' series, and 'thousands of detached illustrations from magazines and postcards — the envy of the police and other guardians of public morality': Miller to JK Moir, 27 September, 1948, JK Moir collection, box 11, SLV. See also Philip Mead, 'What happened to the Walker books?', unpublished conference paper, Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, Hobart, 2007, courtesy of the author. Much of Walker's erotica was burned by Crowther after Walker's death. Crowther observed that 'The dear old man was a lover of the female form design and these books dealt very largely with the opposite sex': Crowther, "'My collections': Three interviews with Ken Gilmore'.

in Tasmania in making their wills have hitherto overlooked the claims of such institutions as the local library upon their generosity.¹⁵¹

The *Mercury* referred to the continual need for ongoing philanthropic support in 1907, commenting on the 'inadequate revenue' and 'niggardly' support from the state, suggesting:

The realisation of this fact should also lead some of our wealthy citizens by bequests or otherwise to afford the assistance which the Public Library undoubtedly requires to make it the factor for good which it is capable of becoming. Private liberality is displayed in this direction in other States of the Commonwealth. There is room for a little more display of it here.¹⁵²

Walker had been exposed to the ongoing difficulties of the Tasmanian Public Library, and the necessity for public philanthropy, through the press and in his daily experience of the institution.¹⁵³ Given that the university library had very few books, he would have relied on the public library for most of his reading in his formative years.¹⁵⁴ Walker had also been exposed to Miller's publicised opinions about the need for dynamic reform of the library. A year prior to Walker's offer, Miller had raised his concerns at a public meeting with a paper entitled 'Libraries in America — and in Tasmania; the Penny Rate Advocated'.¹⁵⁵ In the paper, Miller bemoaned the 'comparatively stagnant condition' of the

¹⁵¹ AJ Taylor, 'Tasmanian Public Library', circular 14 November, 1905, in Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵² 'The Public Library', unidentified newspaper clipping, hand dated '6 July 1907', in State Library of Tasmania Press cuttings and miscellaneous printed material, SLT14/1, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵³ Miller wrote that Walker had 'used the library since he was a boy': Trustees minutes for meeting 30 October 1923, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵⁴ The University Library suffered 'dismally slow progress': RP Davis, *Open to talent: the centenary history of the University of Tasmania, 1890-1990*, Hobart, 1990, p. 78. This situation was not unusual across the nation — Harrison Bryan notes that in general 'universities were even slower to establish effective library services than they were to attract students: H Bryan, 'Libraries', in DH Borchardt and W Kirsop (eds.), *The book in Australia: Essays towards a cultural and social history*, Melbourne, 1988, p. 143. Borchardt has noted that 'during the first twenty years of its existence, the University relied for books almost entirely on the private collections of its teaching staff and to some small degree on the Hobart Public Library': DH Borchardt, 'The University of Tasmania Library 1889-1959', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, 1960, p. 165.

¹⁵⁵ E Morris Miller, *Libraries in America — and in Tasmania; the penny rate advocated*, delivered at a meeting held in Hobart Library Hall, May 1922, (m.s.) 1922, SLT.

public library, and its 'inability to supply the growing needs, and to win the allegiance, of the young when they no longer pursue the formal processes of the schools'.¹⁵⁶ He continued:

The present lack of development of our library is truly a matter of public concern. We desire that the people ... should be personally confronted with this regrettable circumstance... The responsibility for finding the wherewithal does not lie with the Trustees, but with the citizens and the authorities, both municipal and state, who are finally the sponsors for the people in whose interests they hold office.¹⁵⁷

Miller outlined a set of proposals to help elevate the library to a proper position of civic usefulness. Proposal number one was 'more and better books'.¹⁵⁸

Soon after Miller ascended to the chairmanship of trustees, Walker approached Miller informally with his intention to present his Australiana and Tasmaniana to a public institution in Hobart.¹⁵⁹ He initially proposed the library at the University of Tasmania, as he considered the Tasmanian Public Library did not 'show an enlightened interest in the acquisition and preservation of early Australian books', after the library had sold an important volume of early Tasmaniana, *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, in 1918.¹⁶⁰ Miller 'viewed the question from the point of view of public policy as well as mainland library practice', as typically university libraries 'did not specialise in Australiana', while the state public libraries had typically 'made provision for separate Australian collections', and ultimately advised Walker to offer his books to the Tasmanian Public Library.¹⁶¹ Of his own conduct in the affair Miller wrote privately:

¹⁵⁶ Miller, *Libraries in America — and in Tasmania*, p. 1.

¹⁵⁷ Miller, *Libraries in America — and in Tasmania*, p. 2. Miller had a reputation for encouraging would-be philanthropists. Borchardt notes (in the context of Miller's work for the University Library) that Miller 'appears to have had a very keen sense of tracing would-be sellers of small scholarly collections. In addition, he established excellent contacts with numerous government and private agencies which would from time to time present books to the Library': Borchardt, 'The University of Tasmania Library', p. 167.

¹⁵⁸ Miller, *Libraries in America — and in Tasmania*, p. 11.

¹⁵⁹ Walker had made small donations to the institution prior to his major donation of 1923/24, such as George Goodman's *Principles and practice of public reading* (Melbourne, 1865) and the *New south Wales Rifle Association, report for the year ended 1864* (1865): Registers of Public Library statistics and donations, SLT19/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁰ Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV', p. 22. This sale is described in Ch. 5.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.* There were many reasons why Walker would have been attracted to the University as the

I have had to handle several old libraries in this State at various times, and while their contents have been at my mercy, the owners or trustees knowing nothing about them, I have, like Warren Hastings, marvelled at my own modesty in the presence of riches... Usually I have been at the disposal of others, and our local libraries have benefited from my services... One gets into the habit of helping institutions to acquire good things for permanent preservation.¹⁶²

Miller held great admiration for HCL Anderson, who had assisted David Scott Mitchell with his Australiana collecting and was central to the Sydney library's acquisition of the Mitchell collection in 1898, and may have at some level sought to emulate his success at nurturing a future philanthropist.¹⁶³

Walker made his formal offer to the library of his 'private collection of Australian and Tasmanian works' in October 1923, placing specific conditions on the gift. The main condition was that 'no more works dealing with Australia and Tasmania should be permitted in the future to pass from the possession of the library'.¹⁶⁴ The trustees must 'hold the collection, together with all other works relating to Australia and Tasmania at present the property of the Library, in perpetuity', excepting duplicate copies 'which may be exchanged at the discretion of the Trustees at their full value for works of a similar nature'. The trustees must make 'suitable provision for the housing of the works so that they may act as the nucleus of a special collection of Australian and Tasmanian works', and a bookplate inscribed with details of the gift must be placed in each book. In addition to the Australiana, Walker offered to present 'a selection of works from his general library'.

ideal destination for his patronage: Walker had studied there, and worked there as an Examiner; he formed a trusting relationship with Miller in his capacity as Honorary Librarian at the University. The library was heavily reliant on donations in the first decades of its existence. See Borchardt, 'The University of Tasmania Library', pp. 164-65; Davis, *Open to talent: the centenary history of the University of Tasmania, 1890-1990* p. 64; and D Drinkwater, 'E Morris Miller and Australian librarianship', in P Biskup and MK Rochester (eds.), *Australian library history: papers from the second forum on Australian library history, Canberra, 19-20 July 1985*, Canberra, 1985, p. 107.

¹⁶² Miller to JK Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection, box 11, SLV.

¹⁶³ See Roe, *Nine Australian progressives*, pp. 297-298.

¹⁶⁴ Minutes of meeting 30 October 1923, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

After his death in 1933, Walker's widow arranged for another large donation to the library to be selected from Walker's private collection. The volumes were chosen to enhance the existing Australiana, and comprised 'books relating to early Australian and Tasmanian history, biography, and literature, and included a large number of volumes of general literature'.¹⁶⁵ Mary Ann Walker offered the volumes with the desire that 'as many of the books as possible might be added to the William Walker Collection and that there should be devised a suitable means of drawing the attention of the public to the Collection'.¹⁶⁶ She also stipulated that 'the Trustees should satisfy the donor as to their ability to shelve the books and make them available to the public', in line with her late husband's desire to increase public appreciation of Australian literature.¹⁶⁷ The number of books and pamphlets offered in this second donation was initially estimated at 7,000, and the trustees stated that 'the books would mean that the Tasmanian Public Library would have a most complete reference library of Australia and Tasmania'.¹⁶⁸ Miller considered that the value of the collection was as a supplement to the existing collection of Australian works in the library, thereby giving 'the institution the finest collection in works of that kind in Australia, outside New South Wales and Victoria'.¹⁶⁹

The new Australiana collection of the Tasmanian Public Library

Walker made a personal list of the books and manuscripts that were handed over to the library in the first 1923/24 gift, in a 177-page notebook.¹⁷⁰ This list and the extant reference collection accession registers of the library (which cover both gifts)¹⁷¹ give a comprehensive account of the nature and extent of Walker's

¹⁶⁵ Minutes of meeting 4 September 1933, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁶ Mary Ann Walker to JDA Collier, 4 August 1933, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of meeting 4 September 1933, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁸ 'Public Library Mrs. W. Walker's gift', *Mercury*, 5 September 1933, p. 6.

¹⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷⁰ William Walker, notebook, Walker family.

¹⁷¹ Wayne Wiegand has described extant public library accession registers as 'a rich and relatively untapped research resource'. He describes a long-term project, undertaken with assistants, of keying in individual entries from accession registers from a group of regional American public libraries into a database. This allowed him 'to compare and contrast collections over time by means of a variety of fields (including subject) and answer different questions about book demand and book use': W Wiegand, 'Collecting contested titles: the experience of five small public

philanthropy. Walker took some months to select which volumes would be extracted from the thousands of volumes that made up the first donation from his unruly collection. The first donation was delivered over a period of three or four months, from November 1923 to the early months of 1924. The first fifty-nine Walker volumes to be accessioned were entered into the 'Accession Register of Books for the Reference Library'¹⁷² on 16 February 1924. Through March the library staff accessioned dozens of volumes on most days, totaling 514 volumes. In April, 213 volumes were accessioned. The pace of work then dropped considerably, and in the following five months from May to the end of the year only a further 367 were officially added to the collection. Thousands of volumes still waited processing, and by December 1924 there was still no sign of any Walker books accessible to the public. The year 1925 saw only a further 189 volumes added to the register. The final 962 volumes of the gift were added throughout 1926, with an odd volume accessioned right up until 1933. In total 2,032 volumes were added to the Accession Register of Books for the Reference Library from Walker's first gift.¹⁷³

An analysis of the first 750 accessions into the Tasmanian Public Library Reference Collection accession register for 1924 gives a useful picture of the nature of the collection Walker donated.¹⁷⁴ The following paragraphs offer some statistics regarding this sample. Of the first 750 accessions, 100 volumes (13 per cent) were published in Tasmania. Chronologically by publication date, these donations range from the incunabulum *Quintus Servinton* (1830-31), the first novel to be published in the colony of Tasmania, through to 'contemporary' publications from the 1920s. The material is distributed evenly by publication

libraries in the rural Midwest, 1893-1956', *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 40, no. 3, 2005, pp. 368-84. I have employed a modified version of this technique in my analysis of the Walker books.

¹⁷² *Accession register of books for the Reference Library* (1892-20 June 1931), SLT15/1/1, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁷³ In 1929, librarian JDA Collier reported to trustees that some 3,600 'general' volumes of Walker's 1923/24 gift had still not been accessioned, and that 'of these probably not more than 10% will be found of value to the library': Librarian's Report on Arrears, 28 October 1929, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁷⁴ The library staff, presented with thousands of books, sorted them prior to accessioning them. Thus the first 2,000 accessions contain the bulk of the Australiana; the final 500 books from the first gift are predominantly 'general literature'.

date through the decades. The majority of the earliest publications consisted of almanacs and annuals, reflecting the high proportion of this type of material published in the colony in the first half of the nineteenth century. Thirteen per cent of the Tasmanian publications in the selection were sermons or religious tracts published between the 1840s and the 1880s, including copies of the *Tasmanian messenger, a religious magazine for the family, the Sabbath school and the church* and sermons by the prominent liberal Congregationalist George Clarke, who as minister of the Congregational Church in Hobart influenced many citizens, including JB Walker and William Walker. Of the 750 accessions sampled, 265 (35 per cent) were published before Walker's birth, a statistic that gives a clear indication of the historical, antiquarian, and archival bent of a significant portion of the collection.

Of the sample, 264 of the books were published on mainland Australia, in Melbourne, Sydney or Adelaide. Thus a total of 364 books (48 per cent of the collection) were published in one of the states/colonies of Australia. Of the sample, 593 books (79 per cent) could be described as 'Australiana', either published in, or relating to the colonies. Walker also donated a small collection of 'New Zealandiana' (6 per cent of the sample), mostly consisting of travel and description, or tourist guides, and books relating to the south seas or Oceania (3 per cent of the sample). Thirty titles (4 per cent) related to convicts, penal history or penal discipline. Forty-seven books in the sample were Australian fiction; the majority of the substantial fiction portion of the Walker collection was accessioned after the second gift, in the 1930s.¹⁷⁵

Considering the donations thematically, it is evident that the Tasmanian Public Library's collections on Australian history were outstandingly enhanced by the Walker donations. Walker's collection supplied a depth and variety of data for future historians, in material such as the early governmental statistical

¹⁷⁵ The accessions from the second (1933) Walker donation consisted of 1,353 volumes. Of these volumes, some 790 (58 per cent) were Australiana or Tasmaniana, ranging in subject as in the first Walker gift. There were a higher proportion of Australian novels in this gift, most dating from the twentieth century.

publications relating to convicts and transportation, almanacs, and literature on religion and missionary activity. These volumes were valuable to the collection as sources of information, and also in many cases as historical artefacts of their period. Walker presciently included early tourist literature and handbooks for Tasmania, from the 1880s onwards such as James Coutts' *Vacation tours in New Zealand and Tasmania* (1880) and tourism publications by the Tasmanian Steam Navigation Company, which speak to his awareness of the future value of such material to the production of local and regional histories. Seventy-four titles from the sample of 750 were written as 'histories' with the word 'history' in the title (of Australia, Tasmania, New Zealand, Port Phillip, etc), while at least another two hundred related to historical and descriptive matter of Australasia.

The Walker donation contained many volumes of Australian historiography, narratives written to inform the emerging historical consciousness in Australian society. These ranged from the new 'academic' literature researched from primary sources, through popular histories, and children's texts. The academic literature included books such as *A short history of Australia* (1916), written by the first professor of history at the University of Melbourne, Ernest Scott. Scott composed that text in the immediate aftermath of the ANZAC landing at Gallipoli that had indelibly marked the formation of a national character. Scott prefaced his book with the comment that his *Short History* 'begins with a blank space on the map, and ends with the record of a new name on the map, that of Anzac'.¹⁷⁶ Scott's history of the voyages of Jean-François de Galaup La Pérouse was also included in the gift.¹⁷⁷ George William Rusden's *History of Australia* (both three-volume sets, published in 1893 and 1897) were gifted. These represented an older type of historical approach, based on personal experience, and at the time of publication were heavily criticised for their frequent inaccuracies and violent prejudices. The histories are now considered to be 'a major cultural achievement of the colonial period' for their breadth of scale and his deep knowledge and sympathy for the

¹⁷⁶ E Scott, 'Preface', in *A short history of Australia*, London, 1916. For a valuable analysis of Scott as historian, see S Macintyre, 'Ernest Scott: "My history is a Romance"', in S Macintyre and J Thomas (eds.), *The discovery of Australian history 1890-1939*, 1995, pp. 71-90.

¹⁷⁷ E Scott, *Laperouse*, Sydney, 1913.

Aboriginal people.¹⁷⁸ Earlier Australian or Tasmanian histories in the collection included John West's two-volume *History of Tasmania* (1852), and nineteen titles by James Bonwick, ranging in period from his *Mike Howe, the bushranger of Van Diemen's Land* (1873), to *Captain Cook in New South Wales* (1901).

Many popular histories were included, from titles such as *Settler and savage: one hundred years ago in Australia* (1906), by Charles De Boos and AJ Fischer, published by the New South Wales Bookstall Company, to 'nostalgic' historical narratives or local history. Examples of this latter type include from JJ Knight's *In the early days: history and incident of pioneer Queensland: with dictionary of dates in chronological order* (1895), Maynard Ord's *Stawell: past and present* (n.d.), and John Fitzpatrick's *Those were the days: being a record of the doings of the men and women of the Hawkesbury 50 years ago and more* (1923). Australian history written for children also featured, as part of the various school textbooks Walker donated: these included *Thornton's School history of Australia and Tasmania* (1895), Marcus Clarke's *History of the continent of Australia and the island of Tasmania, (1787 to 1870): compiled for the use of schools* (1877), and Watt and Souter's *Stories from Australian history* (1908).

Early exploration literature was also a theme, with a few important key volumes such as James Cook's *Voyages around the world* (1821), François Péron's *A voyage of discovery to the southern hemisphere* (1809), and George William Evans' *Voyage à la terre de Van Diemen* (Paris: Bureau des Annales des Voyages, 1823). Descriptions of later travels to Australasia throughout the nineteenth century also feature. Missionary activity forms a subset of this corpus of Walker's donations, ranging from early nineteenth century accounts such as Daniel Wheeler's *Extracts from the letters and journal of Daniel Wheeler, now engaged in a religious visit to the inhabitants of some of the islands of the Pacific Ocean, Van Diemen's Land, and New South Wales...* (1839) to partisan histories of

¹⁷⁸ A Blainey and M Lazarus, 'Rusden, George William (1819-1903)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A060083b.htm>, accessed 10 September 2009.

missionary activity such as John Brown's *The colonial missions of congregationalism: the story of seventy years* (1908).

The theme of convict history and literature, as Miller observed, was central to the collection. In this area, Walker was relatively unusual, as the wary attitude to the penal past in the Tasmanian community in general had most often translated into disinclination by bibliophiles to privilege this material.¹⁷⁹ The collection had significant early governmental papers and reports on the penal system, convict discipline, and Van Diemen's Land, such as reports by Alexander Maconochie (*Australiana: thoughts on convict management, and other subjects connected with the Australian penal colonies*, 1839, and *Norfolk Island*, 1847), John Dunmore Lang's *Transportation and colonization; or, The causes of the comparative failure of the transportation system in the Australian colonies...* (1837), and David Burn's *Vindication of Van Diemen's Land: in a cursory glance at her colonists as they are, not as they have been represented to be* (1840).

The 'convict collection' also included more recent, and popular accounts, narratives, and fiction relating to the convict era, including Marcus Clarke's Tasmanian convict tale *For the term of his natural life* (1899) and Louis Becke's *Old convict days* (1899). Three works of 'Price Warung' (the pseudonym of William Astley) in the sample include *Tales of the Isle of Death (Norfolk Island)* (1898), and *Tales of the early days* (1894). Astley was a leading radical journalist and short-story writer, who gained fame through his writing for the *Sydney Bulletin*. Astley wrote his fiction from a deep-seated fascination with Australian history, interviewing survivors from the penal period in New South Wales and researching his facts from early Tasmanian and Sydney newspapers.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁹ WELH Crowther, the most significant donor to the SLT in the decades after Walker, formed a collection that was, in Tony Marshall's words, 'markedly bereft of material relating to convicts and the transportation system': Marshall, "The choosing of a proper hobby": Sir William Crowther and his library', p. 410.

¹⁸⁰ BG Andrews, 'Astley, William [Price Warung] (1855-1911)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030056b.htm>, accessed 10 September 2009.

The Walker donations also dramatically improved the library's collection of Australian fiction, both 'high brow' and ephemeral. Some 295 volumes of Australian literature, including fiction, verse and drama, were accessioned into the reference collection from Walker's donations. Of these, ninety-nine (33 per cent) were verse, or a combination of verse and fiction, the remaining 67 per cent fiction. In period, 59 per cent were published in the twentieth century, the largest group in the 1920s. Thirty-nine titles were published in Tasmania, seventy-eight in Britain, and the vast majority of the remaining titles were published on mainland Australia. Prominently featured authors were titles by Louise Becke (twelve titles), Henry Lawson (nine titles), Marcus Clarke (eight titles), Rolf Boldrewood (seven titles), Arthur Rees and Herbert Scanlon (six titles each), Jack McLaren and Steele Rudd (five titles each), Roy Bridges, Louisa Anne Meredith, and Sydney Walter Powell (four titles each), with two titles by Marie Bjelke Petersen and Rosa Praed. The new acquisitions ensured that the Tasmanian library had one of the best collections of Australian fiction — particularly 'popular' fiction — in the country.¹⁸¹

The great majority of the Walker donations were accessioned into the reference collections, where they achieved status as permanent collections. A total of 449 books from the Walker donations were accessioned into the lending library, between 1924 and 1939.¹⁸² Almost all of these books were published in the twentieth century, and very few related to Australia or were published in Australia. The lending collection portion included none of the 'ephemera' (such as tourist guides, pamphlets, almanacs and magazines) that was a prominent part of the Walker collection placed in the reference library. This strengthens the case that the library deliberately 'archived' the Australian material, in comparison to those designed for the lending collection. It also supports the contention that the

¹⁸¹ This situation was replicated in New Zealand, in the Hocken Collection. A 1936 report found that no twentieth century periodicals and very little 'creative literature' had been acquired to date. See S Strachan, 'The Hocken Collections', in S Strachan and L Tyler (eds.), *Kataoka Hakana, Treasures from the Hocken collections*, Dunedin, NZ, 2007, pp. 20-26; and Barrowman, 'A labour of love', p. 22.

¹⁸² The Walker books that were placed in the lending library included religious texts, sermons, books on travel and description from all parts of the globe, some fiction classed as 'literature' (rather than popular fiction), some history, and what we would now term 'self-help'.

acquisition of the Walker collection promoted deliberate archiving of ephemera (compared to utilitarian or 'highbrow' literature) related to Tasmania and the colonies for the first time.¹⁸³

Walker's philanthropic legacy

In his Will, Walker extended his philanthropy to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, with the bequest of a large historical artefact collection relating to Tasmania that had belonged to local historian James Watt Beattie. This, as well as his second book donation to the Tasmanian Public Library, 'aroused considerable interest in Hobart, as well as in the State generally'.¹⁸⁴ Walker stipulated that for the Beattie bequest to be finalised the Hobart City Council must provide financial assistance of £250 to the Tasmanian Museum. The *Mercury* reported that Walker had two objects in making his stipulation: 'in the first place, that he felt the citizens as a whole would wish to be linked in a movement to secure this famous collection, and secondly, it would give a lead to civic interest in regards the public institutions of the capital city'.¹⁸⁵ The *Mercury* correspondent lamented the '[l]ack of civic pride [that] has been prominently before the public of late' and hoped that 'Mr. Walker's actions in regard to the Library, the Museum and public institutions generally will ... set an example for others to follow'.¹⁸⁶

Tasmanian Museum Director Clive Lord waxed lyrical about the connection that had been publicly made between these two major protectors and promoters of Tasmanian history, Walker and Beattie: 'Mr. Walker ... by his magnificent gesture, linked his name with that of Mr. Beattie in a lasting memorial, which would ever keep fresh the memory of one who had often expressed his wish to contribute something really worth while to the life of the community'.¹⁸⁷ The Melbourne newspaper the *Australasian* included a lengthy entry on Walker's

¹⁸³ As the annual reports show, the library had archived early newspapers from the 1870s onwards, but the practice was not rigorous, nor did it extend to other types of ephemeral material.

¹⁸⁴ 'Beattie collection. The Walker gift', *Mercury*, 22 May 1933, p. 3.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.* As well as providing the finances to purchase the entire collection from the Beattie Estate, Walker left £250 pounds from his Estate to the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, matching the £250 that he expected the City Council to provide (which went to the Beattie Estate).

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ 'Historic relics. The Beattie collection secured for Hobart. Late Mr. W. Walker's gesture', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 3.

philanthropy in its 'Hobart notes' at the time of Walker's first gift in 1923. The article concluded with the observation that '[i]n Tasmania there are a number of people who have very valuable collections of this kind, and it is hoped that Mr Walker's example will be followed by others'.¹⁸⁸

Walker was not ostentatious in his philanthropy, and never suggested that his collection, once acquired by the library, should bear his name.¹⁸⁹ Nevertheless, the trustees considered that the Australiana should be called 'The Walker Collection', given the 'important nature of the gift'.¹⁹⁰ This title was actively used through to at least the 1940s, when Ferguson quoted it in his description of Walker's *Quintus Servinton* in his *Bibliography of Australia*.¹⁹¹ It is significant that in the 1920s and 1930s the library staff referred to the national material as the 'Walker Collection of Australiana',¹⁹² rather than 'Tasmaniana', as it came to be promoted in later decades. National status, particularly for a provincial outpost of the national archive such as the Tasmanian Public Library, depended in this period on the promotion of recognisably 'national' rather than local collections.

Walker's benefaction to the Tasmanian Public Library was not unproblematic. Due to ongoing economic restrictions, the collection was inadequately housed for a long period. It took up to ten years after acquisition for some of the volumes to be accessioned. Miller noted that, although 'in the long run [the Walker books] retrieved the deterioration of the library as a public institution', 'to receive them at

¹⁸⁸ 'Hobart notes/ a gift of books', *Australasian*, 10 November 1923, p. 1013.

¹⁸⁹ Miller stated that 'he knew that Mr. Walker had nothing of that sort in his mind when he made the offer': 'Gift to the library. Valuable collection of books', *Mercury*, 31 October 1923, p. 3. This is in marked contrast to the later donor Henry Allport, who bequeathed the *Allport Library and Museum of Fine Arts* to the State Library of Tasmania through his will in 1949, as a 'permanent memorial to the Allport family', and also in contrast to Crowther, whose donation in 1964 resulted in a permanent collection also named after a member of his family: the 'WL Crowther Library': See Tony Marshall, 'Allport, Crowther and Craig: three Tasmanian collectors and the State Library of Tasmania'.

¹⁹⁰ Minutes of meeting 27 November 1923, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁹¹ JA Ferguson, *Bibliography of Australia. Volume 1. 1784-1830*, Canberra, 1975, p. 501. The nomenclature 'Walker Collection' fell out of active use in the library from the 1950s.

¹⁹² JDA Collier, 'Report on re-organisation 16/12/1924', in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

the time was literally a burden'.¹⁹³ When mainland academic and champion of Australian literature, George Mackaness, visited the library in 1934 and requested to see the Australian books on open access he was shown 'some three dozen frowsy volumes'.¹⁹⁴ However, in the two decades after Walker's first gift, library staff made some attempt to promote the existence of the collection, in the face of crippling shortages of funds. This will be described in the following chapters.

Conclusion

This chapter has examined the shift in philanthropic activity in Australia from predominantly 'moral' to nationalistically 'patriotic' philanthropy around the turn of the century. It traced the ideological congruence that emerged in this period between the leisure activity of book collecting, philanthropy and patriotic sentiment. The chapter has argued that at this time the formation of a collection of Australiana (or Tasmaniana, or New Zealandiana) emerged as a hobby with ideological spillover in the context of emergent nationalism, increasing historical consciousness, and a perception of civic duty. The stimulation for change to this attitude was the notion of collecting for the national archive stimulated by Federation nationalism, the strengthening interest in local history and historical consciousness, as well as prominent examples of major philanthropists such as David Scott Mitchell.

Collecting of material related to the nation, and the donation of this material to the key 'national' libraries in Australia was conceived for the first time as a 'patriotic service' to the nation. The collections that were donated, which concentrated predominantly on historical material, were understood by many library professionals and commentators for the first time as being intrinsically valuable as a 'set' of national documents. In the formation of such national 'sets', the collectors deflected potentially negative attitudes to this use of leisure time, and were able to derive social approbation from their collecting and significant reflex benefit from their philanthropy. By donating these collections to the major public

¹⁹³ EM Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 II. Tasmanian Public Library', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 1, 1954, p. 14.

¹⁹⁴ George Mackaness, 'The future of Australian literature', *Age*, 23 February 1935, p. 4.

libraries, they facilitated significant change in the institutions themselves, and changes in attitudes to history and the potential to 'write' the nation in the future.

The next chapter examines the specific effect of Tasmania's penal past on aspects of the development of a local collection at the Tasmanian Public Library over a century. The chapter utilises recent theoretical perspectives to gain a deeper understanding of the role of local literature in the formation of local identity. The chapter considers these questions by examining the Tasmanian Public Library's changing responses to a particular text, convict author Henry Savery's *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land: from the Colonial Times* (1829).

CHAPTER 5:

Penal history and the archive: The Tasmanian Public Library and *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*

Introduction

This chapter explores the effect of social memory, and impulses to social amnesia, on the evolution of the local archive in the public library. In particular it examines how acts of 'forgetting' can have as much significance as acts of 'remembering' on the formation of the archive. This occurs through practices of foregrounding, or legitimating, specific aspects of the past and through the corresponding abrogation of other less tolerable aspects. As Alon Confino has observed, '[b]ecause memory attempts to sustain a relationship of power, the construction of memory emerges as a contested process, as a social, cultural and political conflict to define the "correct" image of the past'.¹ Peter Burke has suggested that to understand the implications of this remembering and disremembering on historical consciousness within any particular community, it is necessary to consider the 'social organization of forgetting, the rules of exclusion, suppression or repression, and the question of who wants whom to forget what, and why'.² This chapter uses the institution of the public library as a means of exploring an aspect of this social organisation of memory and history in the public historical sphere. An explication of the role of the public library in this social contestation contributes to a richer understanding of the political nature of the institution and the ongoing cultural struggle of the formation of the archive.

Burke contends that throughout human history social amnesia has prompted official 'acts of oblivion', the 'official erasure of memories of conflict in the

¹ A Confino, *The nation as a local metaphor: Württemberg, imperial Germany, and national memory, 1871-1918*, Chapel Hill, 1997, p. 9.

² P Burke, *Varieties of cultural history*, Cambridge, 1997, pp. 55-57. Burke's view is relatively unproblematic, in that he finds historians, and writing/records as participants in the process of resistance against social amnesia. He states, for example, that '[w]riting and print thus assist the resistance of memory to manipulation' (p. 59). This chapter finds that the public library (typically characterised as a place where memory resides) can in fact be collusive to social amnesia in certain circumstances. Recent findings in the field of archive theory have alerted historians to these possibilities, as noted in the thesis Introduction.

interests of social cohesion'.³ The example of the Tasmanian Public Library is particularly pertinent in this context, because of Tasmania's history as a penal colony and the ongoing complexity of attitudes to the convict past in the general community. Of all the Australian colonies, Tasmania has arguably had the deepest imprint of convict origins lasting longest on community attitudes to history. Michael Roe has observed that the 'Tasmanian grim and gothic were managed by being minimised', but 'gained greater potency from being avoided rather than confronted'.⁴ The effect of this 'minimising' of the convict era, and the gradual change of attitude in the early twentieth century to this aspect of Tasmania's past, had great implications for the formation of the local archive at the Tasmanian Public Library. Using the Tasmanian Public Library and convict themes as central, the chapter examines elements of conflict, erasure, and degrees of official approval for social amnesia, and place against these the individual acts of resistance performed by local amateur historians, book collectors and philanthropists.

In order to focus the analysis, the chapter uses community responses to artefacts that have a mnemonic relationship to the convict past. Scholarship in material culture studies, and in particular museology, have demonstrated in recent decades the value of the study of artefacts in gauging social memory, dealing with both their material characteristics and their collective and individual emotional significance.⁵ Community responses to artefacts articulate specific responses to the past; how artefacts are treated in institutional contexts is an effective measure of social memory in its 'official' form. In understanding how such a process might occur, Marius Kwint's description of the operation of memory in the context of material culture in the West is illuminating. Kwint argues that objects

³ Burke, *Varieties of cultural history*, p. 57.

⁴ M Roe, 'Commemoration: Tasmanian slices', in M Lake (ed.), *Memory, monuments and museums: the past in the present*, Carlton, Vic., 2006, p. 229. Robson observes that 'Tourists remarked on Tasmanians' indifference verging on hostility to their history and the relics of it, and it was to be many years before this attitude changed': LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania volume II: colony and state from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1991, p. 288.

⁵ See for example essays in SM Pearce, (ed.), *Interpreting objects and collections*, London; New York, 1994, esp. SM Pearce, 'Objects as meaning; or narrating the past', pp. 19-29. See also, in the Australian context, P Edmonds, 'Imperial objects, truths and fictions: reading nineteenth-century Australian colonial objects as historical sources', in P Edmonds and S Furphy (eds.), *Rethinking colonial histories: new and alternative approaches*, Parkville, Vic., 2006, pp. 73-87.

or artefacts can serve memory in three principal ways: they ‘furnish recollection’, constituting our picture of the past; they stimulate remembering through ‘deployed mnemonics’ and chance encounters; and they form records, ‘analogues to living memory, storing information beyond individual experience’.⁶ Kwint finds that these processes ‘privilege the process of evocation’, ‘an open dialogue between the object, the maker and the consumer in constructing meaning’.⁷ This dialogue, continued through time, becomes history: of the object, and the stories it creates around itself.

Exploiting this conceptualisation, this chapter uses an analysis of changing responses to a specific bibliographic artefact, convict author Henry Savery’s *The Hermit in Van Diemen’s Land: from the Colonial Times* (1829), one of the first books printed in the colony. This chapter argues that this book (as both artefact in its few published copies) and as text, operated as a mnemonic object, contributing to the Tasmanian community’s collective memory. The nature of its mnemonic role changed over a century, due to complex and evolving societal attitudes to Tasmania’s penal past, the development of nostalgia as a filter to the problematics of memory early in the twentieth century, and the increasing interest from the late nineteenth century in early Tasmanian literature, fostered and promoted by a small number of local bibliophiles. The activities of key individuals already mentioned in this thesis (including James Bonwick, James Backhouse Walker, and William Walker, among others) that were engaged with this text in its acquisition, research and disposal, are examined in this context. At the centre of the discussion is the acquisition by the Tasmanian Public Library of a copy of *The Hermit*, and its subsequent disposal from the collection by the library trustees in the first decades of the twentieth century.

The chapter also addresses contemporaneous responses to other related historical ‘curios’ of the penal period to further enrich the discussion of social amnesia and changing historical consciousness in Tasmania. The bequest of the JW Beattie

⁶ M Kwint, 'Introduction: the physical past', in C Breward, M Kwint and J Aynsley (eds.), *Material memories: design and evocation*, Oxford, 1999, p. 2.

⁷Kwint, 'Introduction', p. 3.

collection of Tasmanian artefacts and historical materials to the Tasmanian Museums and Art Gallery in Hobart by library philanthropist William Walker is considered in this context.

History, memory and the development of the local archive

The relation between memory and history has received increasing attention both from historians and literary critics in recent decades. The ways in which social memory is formed, disseminated, institutionalised and negotiated through artefact and text have been examined in some detail, though principally in the context of museology and memorial sites.⁸ Although public libraries have been generally characterised as ‘repositories of public memory’ or ‘memory institutions’ along with museums and archives, little specific work has been undertaken in Australia into how the public library performs this role, and whether it is valid for all institutions and for all times.⁹ How does a public library respond to the development of historical consciousness within its particular community, specifically in relation to the vicissitudes of public remembering, and public forgetting? How does it act as a vehicle for collective memory — in Pierre Nora’s conception, as a ‘site of memory’, or *lieu de mémoire* — in forging a community’s self-definition in relation to its past?

The study of the formation of collective memory — how communities perceive their own ‘pasts, presents and futures’ — received much stimulation from Pierre Nora’s publication of the monumental edited project *Les lieux de mémoire* (*Sites*

⁸ There is a rapidly growing historiography in this area. See P Nora, ‘Between memory and history: les lieux de mémoire’, *Representations*, vol. 26, 1989, pp. 7-24; P Nora and LD Kritzman, *Realms of memory: rethinking the French past*, New York, 1996. See also M Rossington and A Whitehead, *Theories of memory: a reader*, Edinburgh, 2007.

⁹ See M Lake, ‘Introduction: the past in the present’, in Lake, *Memory, monuments and museums*, pp. 1-11; T Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1996; and C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997 for examples of this conceptualisation in Australian historiography. Michael Piggott effectively critiques this formulation, with a focus on archives, in M Piggott, ‘Archives and memory’, in S McKemmish (ed.), *Archives: recordkeeping in society*, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2005, pp. 299-327. Piggott observes that ‘how archives support memory differently from library and museum materials awaits sustained analysis’ (p. 309). For an example of work on social memory in the public library internationally, see B MacLennan, ‘The library and Its place in cultural memory: the Grande Bibliothèque du Québec in the construction of social and cultural identity’, *Libraries and the Cultural Record*, vol. 42, no. 4, 2007, pp. 349-86.

of memory) from 1984 to 1992 and subsequent English reprints. Originally focused on the construction of French national identity through collective memory, Nora broadened the conception of *lieux de mémoire* in 1996 to 'any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community'.¹⁰ International scholarship in the field of collective memory formation is also moving away from the nation and specific collectivities, to investigations of the ways memories are used in everyday discourse at a local level and the negotiation at this level of diverse, and often conflicting, memories.¹¹ Although Nora's formulation of *lieux de mémoire* has received criticism, directed variously at the nostalgic and elegiac mode in which it is formulated,¹² and the artificial dichotomy between self-conscious modernity and the 'innocence' of older cultures that Nora posits,¹³ the specific conception of *lieux de mémoire* provides a useful hook with which to articulate a particular symbolic aspect of collective memory.¹⁴

Nora suggests that *lieux de mémoire* are places where 'a sense of historical continuity persists' created by the 'will to remember' and they exist because of their 'capacity for metamorphosis, an endless recycling of their meaning and an unpredictable proliferation of their ramifications'.¹⁵ Nora describes the *lieux de*

¹⁰ Nora and Kritzman, *Realms of memory*, p. xvii.

¹¹ See, for example, the research questions posed for the international conference 'Local memories', Universiteit Antwerpen, 2009: www.ua.ac.be/localmemories, accessed 14 July 2008.

¹² See, for example, J Frow, 'In the penal colony', in M Rossington and A Whitehead (eds.), *Between the psyche and the polis: refiguring history in literature and theory*, Aldershot, 2000; and NA King, *Memory, narrative, identity: remembering the self*, Edinburgh, 2000. Despite his criticism, Frow usefully applies Nora's conception of *lieux de mémoire* to monuments of Tasmania's penal past.

¹³ See, for example, AJM Henare, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*, Cambridge, UK; New York, 2005.

¹⁴ Memory studies have increasingly been criticised in recent years. Alon Confino, for example, suggests that the term 'memory' has been depreciated by surplus use and lack of rigorous analyses. He urges better analyses of how the representation of memory has been interpreted and received, the connection of the social and political, and the relationship among memories in any given society. See A Confino, 'Collective memory and cultural history: problems of method', *American Historical Review*, vol. 102, no. 5, 1997, pp. 1386-1403. Australian historian Marilyn Lake suggests that '[w]hile the construction of historical memory continues to excite controversy, it is important that we understand the reasons for people's investment in the past and the relationship between collective memory and contemporary identity': Lake, 'Introduction: the past in the present', p. 3.

¹⁵ Nora, 'Between memory and history', pp. 7, 10, 19.

mémoire that are archives, libraries and museums as ‘heritage consolidated’.¹⁶ He considers that *lieux de mémoire* originate with the sense that there is no longer spontaneous memory, and that organisations such as archives and libraries are ‘bastions’ upon which ‘we buttress our identities’.¹⁷ Significantly he finds them essentially nostalgic in character, reflecting a powerful sense of break with the past, of ‘history torn away from the movement of history’.¹⁸ In Australian historiography the notion that libraries and archives embody our memorial heritage, preserving ‘evidence of a past that might otherwise be forgotten’,¹⁹ has been widely accepted.²⁰ Recognised as key players in the ‘public historical sphere’, libraries are places where citizens identify through the narrative of history as ‘subjects within the shared framework of the nation state’.²¹

However, as this thesis has demonstrated, the actual formation of a public historical sphere (in the form of archives and libraries) in which such an effect can be enacted has been difficult and contested in Australia. The construction of a ‘repository of public memory’ in the public library context is a political process in which community attitudes to history are deeply implicated. The common formulation that by the *possession* of material culture, libraries and archives sustain and uphold collective memory (and thereby act as *lieux de mémoire*) needs to be more carefully interrogated. How does this activity of constructing a ‘repository of public memory’ take place in any particular community, and what conflicts and dichotomies might arise?

Joanna Sassoon’s study of collective memory within the Public Library and State Archives in Western Australia is one of the few examples in which such an investigation of local forms of social memory in the public library has been

¹⁶ Nora, ‘Between memory and history’, p. 12.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Lake, ‘Introduction: the past in the present’, pp. 1-2.

²⁰ See, for example, K Darian-Smith and P Hamilton, *Memory and history in twentieth century Australia*, Melbourne, 1994.

²¹ Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism*, p. 75.

undertaken in Australia.²² Sassoon's article politicises the cultural functions of archival institutions as sites of memory, offering a 'critique of the way archival memory is created and preserved' via documentary records.²³ Sassoon's article demonstrates that the Public Library of Western Australia did not have a passive memorial function, but in fact actively shaped public perception of the past through its selective acquisition process, particularly relating to convict records. Erasure of aspects of the past forms part of the institutional construction of social memory. Sassoon's study highlights the need to 'interrogate the manner in which collections of memories [that libraries and archives] contain are socially constructed and socially controlled'.²⁴ This chapter explores similar phenomena at the Tasmanian Public Library, using evidence of the public library's changing attitude to local literature collections, rather than to archival records, in measuring its role as a *lieu de mémoire*.

My examination of the role of the Tasmanian Public Library as a site of memory hinges on a key element of Nora's conceptualisation, namely the changing will to remember. While all societies have different attitudes to their past, according to the way their own history has played out, scholars have recognised that the forging of collective cultural memory gains a particular urgency and complexity in societies that bear the legacy of colonialism.²⁵ Tasmania has experienced a persistently uneasy relationship with its past. For many decades after the transportation of convicts ceased in 1853, Tasmanians practiced widespread social amnesia in regard to the convict period, generally colluding in an attempt to 'erase

²² There are a handful of international studies that consider these issues, including MacLennan, 'The Library and Its Place in Cultural Memory', pp. 349-86, and A Lloyd, 'Guarding Against Collective Amnesia? Making Significance Problematic: An Exploration of Issues', *Library Trends*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2007, pp. 53-66.

²³ J Sassoon, 'Phantoms of remembrance: libraries and archives as "the collective memory"', *Public History Review*, vol. 10, 2003, p. 40. See also J Gregory, 'Guards and snipers: local history in Western Australia', in J Partridge (ed.), *Caretakers and sharers: preserving the local identity*, Perth, WA, 1992, pp. 15-20. Gregory notes that JS Battye, the head of the State Reference Library in Perth, 'guarded the history of [WA] both literally, and after his death, symbolically for at least 50 years' (p. 15), suppressing information on both local indigenous massacres and convicts.

²⁴ Sassoon, 'Phantoms of remembrance', p. 44.

²⁵ Rossington and Whitehead, *Theories of memory: a reader*, pp. 1-2. See also BR Anderson, *Imagined communities: reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*, London; New York, 1991.

... its sad history from our memories'.²⁶ This important aspect of cultural memorialising is at the centre of John Frow's examination of the multiple histories of the Tasmanian penal settlement Port Arthur, for example. Here, in 'the interwoven times of the nation-state and of living collective memory',²⁷ Frow confirms that the 'study of memorializing must account for forgetting and the resistances within and between periodicities of remembrance'.²⁸

In examining how and when attitudes to — and imbricated in — *lieux de mémoire* changed over the course of some decades, this chapter charts the changing degree of will to remember. These observations, then, can give a deeper insight into the relationship between Tasmanians, their literature, and their public library, and enriches our understanding of the ways in which a small interpretative community negotiated its difficult history.

History, memory and the 'history of the book'

In seeking to understand cycles of memory related to a text, this chapter takes advantage of conceptual approaches offered within the discipline of the history of the book. This discipline offers ways to examine social memory within the public library and its books via the sociology of texts: 'the historicity of ways of using, comprehending, and appropriating texts'.²⁹ Thomas Adams' and Nicolas Barker's model for the study of books 'considered as historic artefacts and as a function of social history' is a particularly useful framework for tracing the phenomena of collective memory through responses to a text and its formation as a *lieu de mémoire*.³⁰ Barker's and Adams' model is cyclical, consisting of the stages of publication, manufacture, distribution, reception and survival. The final stage of the cycle — survival — is divided into three phases. The first phase is the book's

²⁶ Editorial, *Mercury* (Hobart), 21 July 1876, p. 2. As well as the occlusion of memory of the convict past, the massacre and dispossession of the indigenous population was a further cause of discomfort and deliberate amnesia in the community. See H Reynolds, *Why weren't we told?: A personal search for the truth about our history*, Ringwood, Vic., 1999, p. 92.

²⁷ Frow, 'In the penal colony', p. 123.

²⁸ M Rossington and A Whitehead, 'Introduction', in Rossington and Whitehead, *Between the psyche and the polis*, p. 9.

²⁹ G Cavallo and R Chartier, 'Introduction', in G Cavallo and R Chartier (eds.), LG Cochrane (translator), *A history of reading in the West*, Amherst, 1999, p. 3.

³⁰ N Barker and TR Adams, 'A new model for the study of the book', in N Barker (ed.), *A potencie of life: books in society: the Clark lectures, 1986-1987*, London, 2001, p. 5.

creation and initial reception and distribution; the second, the period during which it comes to rest without any use or at least intensive use (normally on a private or institutional bookshelf). The third phase (if it survives the second) is 'when it is discovered that it is a book desirable as an object, either in its own right or because of the text it contains'.³¹ Here, I argue, the book may take on the characteristics of a *lieu de mémoire*, when not only scholarly interest is attached to it, but there is also a wider social conception of its value in recalling and memorialising the age that brought it into existence, constituting a community's 'picture of the past', and 'stimulating remembering'.

The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land has been chosen for this investigation because, as text and as artefact, it is a unique signifier of the memorial heritage of the Tasmanian community. Not only is it a story of origins, colourfully describing an early period of white settlement in Hobart, it is also an Australian incunabulum, the first printed book of sketches in Tasmania. A significant body of evidence exists that can be called upon to illustrate stages of the 'book cycle'. Most significantly, all the extant copies of the 1829 printing are 'exceptional survivors', bearing extensive and locally specific marginalia that shows the prominent intervention of readers into the life cycle of the book. As HJ Jackson has argued, such marginalia can give special access to 'certain aspects of reading response and audience engagement': a 'marked or annotated book traces the development of the reader's self-definition in and by relation to the text'.³² While David Hall has warned that such 'episodes of reader response are not easily converted into general arguments', in this case the marginalia in copies of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* offers important insights into a continuity of response by readers and researchers over a number of generations that has direct implications for the extent to which the text may be regarded as a *lieu de mémoire*.³³

³¹Barker and Adams, 'A new model for the study of the book', p. 32.

³² HJ Jackson, *Marginalia: readers writing in books*, New Haven, 2001, pp. 254, 87. Roger Chartier has noted the growing significance attributed by historians of the book to handwritten marginalia as evidence of readerly appropriation of texts: R Chartier, 'The order of books revisited', *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, pp. 509-519.

³³ DD Hall, 'What was the history of the book? A response', *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 1997, p. 540. For examples of the use of the history of publication, transmission and reception of specific convict/colonial Tasmanian texts, see Roslyn Haynes' discussion of Marcus

Henry Savery's *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*: creation and reception

Henry Savery (1791-1842), author of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* and *Quintus Servinton*, was transported to Tasmania in 1825.³⁴ Because he was an educated convict, his skills were exploited in the small colony. He served his sentence as a clerk in the Colonial Secretary's office and later that of the Colonial Treasurer. In these roles Savery had unusually wide access to the small community of free settlers and administrators of Hobart. He was 'familiar with [the] modes of life' of the leading citizens of Hobart and its environs, having 'visited their homes in town and country'.³⁵ The convict Savery's apparent freedoms and privileges were the cause of considerable local and British press coverage, and of criticism by the Colonial Office in London of Lieutenant-Governor Arthur's management of the Colony.³⁶ Savery was one of a group of 'educated prisoners', 'prodigal sons of many a desolated house' who, according to colonial historian John West, filled a gap in the colony's work force. In this early period, 'many of the higher functionaries were utterly ignorant of accounts, and were glad to employ the abilities which transportation placed at their disposal'.³⁷

Savery's insights into Hobartian society provided rich material for his venture into satirical journalism. *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, Savery's first published work in the Colony, was originally presented in print as a series of thirty sketches published over a period of six months in 1829 in the anti-establishment paper *The Colonial Times*. The sketches were printed under the pseudonym of Simon Stukeley, as an official order forbade convicts to write for the press. John West

Clarke's *For the term of his natural life*, in RD Haynes, *Tasmanian visions: landscapes in writing, art and photography*, Sandy Bay, Tas., 2006, Chapter 5, pp. 57-74; and Babette Smith's discussion of *Martin Cash: the bushranger of Van Diemen's Land*, in B Smith, *Australia's birthstain: the startling legacy of the convict era*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2008, pp. 318-19.

³⁴ John West wrote sympathetically of Savery's situation, noting that 'Happier far, had he died!': J West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, 1852, (facsimile edition, Adelaide, 1966), pp. 242-43. *Quintus Servinton* is credited as the first novel published in the Australian colonies.

³⁵ EM Miller, *Australia's first two novels: origins and backgrounds*, Hobart, 1958, p. 12.

³⁶ LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania volume I: Van Diemen's Land from the earliest times to 1855*, Melbourne, 1983, pp. 156-58.

³⁷ West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, pp. 242, 241. In Arthur's time, 36 of these educated convicts were employed in various government departments, 'represented to be quick, intelligent men, and were preferred because more easily commanded — if not controlled', and were frequently involved in bribery for 'expediting indulgences' for other convicts, and selling information to shopkeepers. Arthur professed to 'deplore the necessity of their employment': West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 241.

wrote in 1852 that the colonial government:

...interdicted the connection of prisoners with the press, which, however, was not prevented or punished, when loyal to the authorities. Their writings were commonly laudatory of the officials, even when most offensive to the colonists. They were not always the most truculent and unprincipled; although the censorship of public morals and political measures was unsuited to their civil condition.³⁸

The true identity of the author was a well-preserved secret until the 1860s.³⁹ The sketches together contained thinly disguised descriptions of some 150 people encountered by the author in Hobart. The avowed purpose of the sketches was 'to impart information upon the state of manners and society in the Colony of Van Diemen's Land'. This picture of the 'infant state' was offered for instruction and amusement 'not only to its own component Members, but to the general Reader'.⁴⁰

According to James Bonwick, who wrote the first history of the colonial Australian press and was resident in Hobart from the 1840s, *The Hermit* 'made a great impression upon colonial society', and brought the *Colonial Times* notoriety across Australia.⁴¹ The sketches were gathered together and published in Hobart in book form by Savery's friend and editor, Henry Melville, a few months after their appearance in the *Colonial Times*.⁴² A week after its publication was announced in the *Colonial Times* on 8 January 1830, it was stated in the Hobart press that publication was suspended due to an action for alleged libel by lawyer Mr Butler.⁴³ The action took place on 10 May 1830, with specific essays published in *The Hermit* series described as being 'a gross attack upon the

³⁸ West, *The history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 242.

³⁹ C Hadgraft, 'Biographical introduction', *Henry Savery, The hermit in Van Diemen's land*, St. Lucia, Queensland, 1964, p. 28.

⁴⁰ Author's preface, *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart Town: Andrew Bent, 1829.

⁴¹ J Bonwick, *Early struggles of the Australian press*, London; Melbourne, 1890, pp. 40, 46.

⁴² *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* was based on the format established in a series of anonymous satirical sketches published under the title *The Hermit in London* in 1818 in the *London Literary Gazette*. The first sketch of *The Hermit in London* appeared on 11 July 1818. A 3 volume, 12 mo. compilation of the sketches in book form (*The Hermit in London; or sketches of English manners* published by Henry Colburn of Conduit Street, London) was advertised in the *Leeds Mercury* on 19 December 1818. The Australian *Hermit* thus emulated not only the literary style, but also the means of print distribution.

⁴³ Hadgraft, 'Biographical introduction', p. 29.

professional and moral character of the plaintiff', conveying 'a strong imputation upon Mr. Butler's character'.⁴⁴ Damages of eighty pounds were claimed from publisher Andrew Bent, who was found guilty on four of the five libel charges. It is likely that the small number of copies of *The Hermit* that were released were printed surreptitiously in 1830, and extant copies typically have mutilations to conceal publishing details.⁴⁵ The book soon became a great rarity.⁴⁶



Title page with mutilated publisher's details, *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* (1829). (Henry Savery, *The hermit in Van Diemen's Land: from the Colonial Times*, Hobart Town, Printed by Andrew Bent, 1829, State Library of Victoria, copy with bookplate of James Edge-Partington)

⁴⁴ 'Supreme Court', *Colonial Times*, 14 May 1830, p. 3.

⁴⁵ Hadgraft, 'Biographical introduction', p. 29.

⁴⁶ EM Miller wrote that 'it seems possible that no copies were on sale at bookshops in Hobart' because of the libel action: EM Miller, 'The early Tasmanian press and its writers', in CL Barrett (ed.), *Across the years: the lure of early Australian books*, Melbourne, 1948, p. 45.

Savery wrote another book, *Quintus Servinton*, which was published anonymously in the same year. Savery was imprisoned again as a recidivist forger, and died in the infamous Port Arthur penal prison in 1842.

It seems that *The Hermit* was well read in its serialisation. The notice in November 1829 advertising the planned re-print of the serialised essays in a single volume claimed that the ‘popular essays ... [were] increasing in public estimation and demand, and numerous unsuccessful applications for back numbers ... [were] weekly made’.⁴⁷ *The Hermit* also lingered in public memory in the small community after the libel action, due to its sensational content, curiosity over authorship, and the degree of ire it attracted from members of the establishment.⁴⁸ The *Colonial Times* referred to it as ‘that undying work’ in 1848, two decades after its publication.⁴⁹ The narrativisation of the Hobartian community in *The Hermit* encouraged the evolution of collective self-definition, whether in the process of confirming or denying the veracity of the satire. At an individual level the format of *The Hermit* as an encoded satire invited readerly appropriation and an ‘attached’ reading experience.⁵⁰ Written from within a familiar trope — reading as game playing — *The Hermit* offered ‘knowing readers’ decoding opportunities, challenging them to ‘penetrate into secrets hidden between the lines or beneath the text’.⁵¹ Jackson observes that ‘when satires were published with fictional names or blanks to disguise living subjects, readers rushed to fill them in. Very often they did so not on the basis of personal knowledge but on the authority of published “Keys” or of other annotated copies,

⁴⁷ ‘To be published, January 1, 1830, The Hermit in Van Diemen’s Land’, *Colonial Times*, 6 November 1829, p. 1.

⁴⁸ In similar vein, Ken Inglis has argued the publication of the book *Michael Howe, the last and worst of the bushrangers* (1818), the first work of general literature to be published in Van Diemen’s Land, was intrinsic to the entrenchment of Howe in popular memory. Thirty years after the book’s publication, a visitor to the colony found Howe ‘without dispute ... the historical great man of this island’: KS Inglis, *Australian colonists: an exploration of social history 1788-1870*, Carlton, Vic., 1993, p. 307.

⁴⁹ ‘Walks about town’, *Colonial Times* (Hobart), 18 April 1848, p. 4. The reference was in context of recalling a specific incident in *The Hermit*: the ‘story of the stocking’, concerning a ‘certain elderly dame’ and a ‘certain well-known shop’.

⁵⁰ For a summary of approaches in book history to this aspect of reading, see Chartier, ‘The order of books revisited’.

⁵¹ R Darnton, ‘“What is the history of books?” revisited’, *Modern Intellectual History*, vol. 4, no. 3, 2007, p. 506.

which might themselves have relied on Keys'.⁵² Not only did this type of satire promote readerly intervention in such books, it also encouraged a communal reading experience through consultation on character identifications and the copying of Keys.

Tasmanian readers did indeed 'rush to fill in' the real names of the characters in *The Hermit*, and passed copies of Keys amongst themselves to aid further disclosures. None of the Keys found in the extant copies of *The Hermit* are exactly alike.⁵³ Differing interpretations of the identity of characters fuelled ongoing attachment to the text by individual readers. One copy of the book, for example, contains not only extensive annotations on the characters throughout the text, but also a note on the flyleaf, probably inscribed within a few years of publication:

To Mrs Brest/ this book belongs, if borrowed/ by a friend most
welcome/ they shall be to read, to study,/ not to lend, but to return
again; / Not that imparted knowledge/ diminished learning's store, but
Books if often lent I find/ return to me no more./ Therefore read
slowly, pause/ frequently,/ keep it clean, return only,/ with the leaves
not turned down,/ and then another will be with/ pleasure lent you.⁵⁴

This inscription attests to both the personal value ascribed to the book by the owner, and the practice of sharing texts in small communities of readers, or social circles.

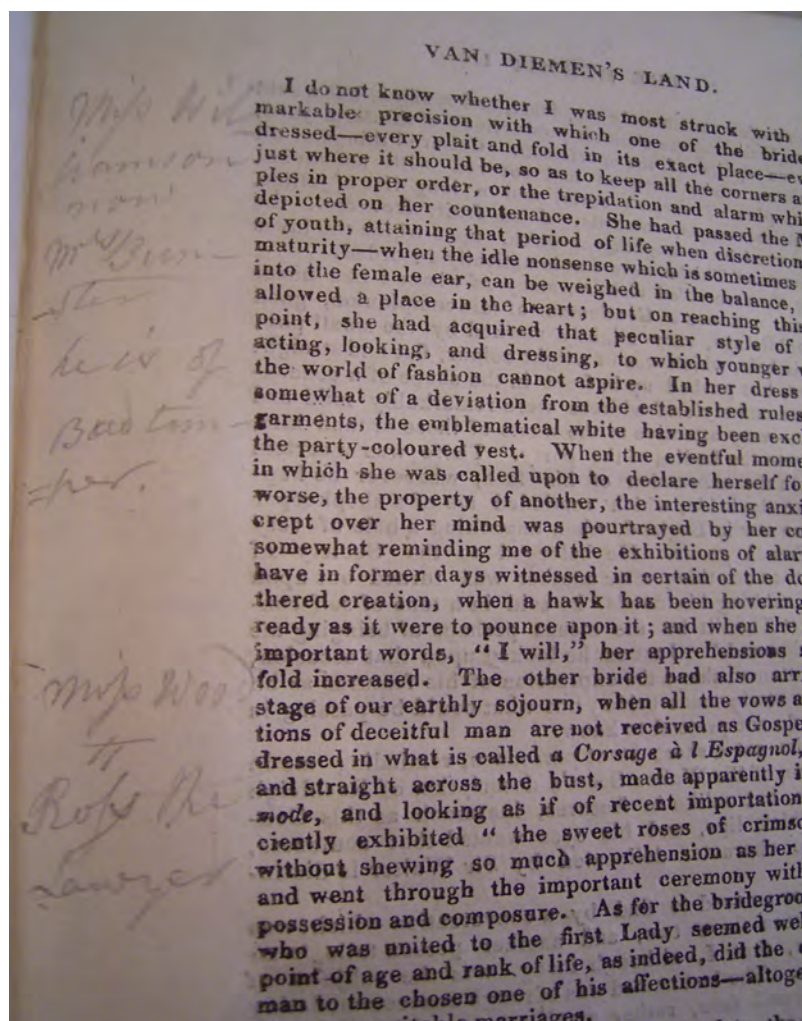
Henry Melville confirmed Savery's authorship of both *The Hermit* and *Quintus Servinton* in 1869 in a lengthy description of the book's early history that he placed in the front of his own copy of *The Hermit*, along with his Key to the identity of the characters depicted, satisfied that his revelations would harm no

⁵² Jackson, *Marginalia*, p. 271.

⁵³ Tasmaniana collector Cecil Allport, who acquired a copy of *The Hermit* with what he considered was the 'original Key' written by John Knight, wrote of this process in 1916 in a letter to Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright. See Cecil Allport to Hugh Wright, 24 September 1916, MLMSS A587, p. 121, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁵⁴ Inscription in the flyleaf of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, copy held by the State Library of Victoria, Melbourne (RARELT 919.461 S93).

one as 'all the parties mentioned except myself are in spirit land'.⁵⁵ Melville's Key signifies a point at which *The Hermit* ceased to function primarily as contemporary satire; from this time *The Hermit* offered itself as an artefact, a signifier for early Hobart, and a mnemonic device for varieties of interpretation of the past.



Example of annotations identifying characters in a copy of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*.

(Henry Savery, *The hermit in Van Diemen's Land: from the Colonial times*, Hobart Town, Printed by Andrew Bent, 1829, State Library of Victoria, copy with bookplate of James Edge-Partington)

⁵⁵ Melville's reference to 'spirit land' reflects his fascination with spiritualism, and his firm belief that old acquaintances would be renewed in the "Land of the Shades" after death. For a contemporary's take on Melville's beliefs, see J Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, London, 1902, esp. p. 118.



John Marshall's 'Key' to *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*, originally inserted in the copy of the book owned by Justin McCarty Brown, and removed by JB Walker. (Special and Rare Materials Collection, Morris Miller Library, University of Tasmania, Hobart, W9/C4/11(6))

The Tasmanian Public Library and the ‘convict stain’

Controversial, and already very rare, a single copy of *The Hermit in Van Diemen’s Land* slipped into the collection of the Tasmanian Public Library in 1889. *The Hermit* entered the collection as part of the large private estate of Justin McCarty Browne, described in Chapter 1. It is very unlikely that the library would have chosen to acquire *The Hermit* if it was offered as an individual purchase. McCarty Browne had obtained a Key from John Marshall, a former employee of the Bank of Van Diemen’s Land. This Key on notepaper was inserted into the McCarty Browne’s copy of *The Hermit*, but the details had not been annotated throughout the volume.

Although the Tasmanian Public Library’s lack of interest in local literature at this time can partly be ascribed to the cultural pretensions of the trustees and the lack of a clear ‘patriotic’ or ‘nationalising’ narrative, the vigorous denial of the convict past was also responsible.⁵⁶ By the 1880s the desire to ‘demonstrate a complete rift with the past’ had become more pronounced.⁵⁷ This was seen from the negotiation of private relationships — particularly in polite society — through to the production of written history.⁵⁸ As historian Lloyd Robson has observed, ‘[i]t was considered very bad form, and indeed insulting, to speak of such a subject when children, grand-children, and great-grand-children of the original convicts were attempting to gain gentility and social credentials and to rise in the world’.⁵⁹ Anthony Trollope had written in 1873 that it was ‘not only that men and women

⁵⁶ For a definitive short description of the effect of the convict past, and the ‘patterns of suppression and silence’ it evoked in colonial and post-colonial society across Australia, see Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, ‘The Birth Stain’, pp. 115-18. A recent monograph on the subject is Babette Smith’s *Australia’s birthstain*, in which she suggests perceptions of rampant homosexuality in the convict population made the convict taint a ‘source of shame so powerful that an entire society colluded in a decision not to discuss the subject’ in either public discourse or private conversation: Smith, *Australia’s birthstain*, p. 6.

⁵⁷ Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 43.

⁵⁸ Ken Inglis, discussing the historical self-concept of Australians in the nineteenth century, refers to the sense held by a significant proportion of Australians that the history of Van Diemen’s Land was a ‘history best forgotten’ rather than ‘a chapter in the true history of Australia.’ In New South Wales, as in Tasmania, ‘writers and orators seeking to interpret the decades of colonial experience, to make an Australian history, found it no easy task to accommodate the age of convictism’: Inglis, *Australian colonists*, pp. 280, 282.

⁵⁹ LL Robson, ‘The Eldershaw Memorial Lecture 1971. Themes in Australian history: Tasmania in the nineteenth century’, *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 19, no. 1, 1972, p. 17.

in Tasmania do not choose to herd with convicts, but that they are on their guard lest it might be supposed that their own existence in the island might be traced back to the career of some criminal relative'.⁶⁰

Tourist literature in the form of guidebooks to Tasmania minimised or ignored the penal past,⁶¹ while the eagerness to leave history behind also had implications for local literature and historiography. A promotional pamphlet for Tasmania in 1879 noted that John West's *History of Tasmania*, published in 1852, included 'everything worth recording' of Tasmania's history, and that Tasmania now looked ahead: '[i]n the future lies the history of Tasmania'.⁶² Many believed that to 'revive reminiscences of the past history of Tasmania [was] by no means consistent with the progress of intellectual refinement'.⁶³ Lloyd Robson observes that '[t]ourists remarked on Tasmanians' indifference verging on hostility to their history and the relics of it... Respectable Tasmanians insisted that the convict past was not their past and clung to the link with Britain instead.'⁶⁴ The association of the penal past with degeneration was closely allied to the lack of interest in preserving written records. Convict records were deliberately destroyed, others lost through neglect or inaction, or indeed sold off.⁶⁵ These factors impacted directly upon the Tasmanian Public Library, where the goal of intellectual refinement and self-cultivation was facilitated by the provision of 'works of a high-class literary character',⁶⁶ which would not have readily included local productions, and certainly not those written by convicts. It was not in the best interests of the library to be seen to be promoting 'past history', nor collecting its artefactual records.

⁶⁰ A Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, London, 1873, vol. 2, p. 22.

⁶¹ Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 17.

⁶² TC Just, *Tasmaniana! A description of the island of Tasmania and its resources*, Launceston, 1879, p. 14.

⁶³ 'Tasmanian visitors' (letter by George Hawthorn), *Mercury*, 25 March 1890, p. 2.

⁶⁴ Robson, *A history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 288.

⁶⁵ J Moore-Robinson, for example, who was active as librarian and publicity officer for the Tasmanian government, had a 'glaring blot' on his career due to his trafficking in Tasmanian records for personal gain. See S Petrow, 'The antiquarian mind: Tasmanian history and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, vol. 137, 2003, p. 70.

⁶⁶ Tasmanian Public Library Trustees to Andrew Carnegie, 13 August 1902, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

The kindling of amateur historians' interest in *The Hermit* from the 1880s

How widely *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* was read or remembered in the late nineteenth century is uncertain. It did, however, capture the interest of a number of local historians and collectors of Tasmaniana, including among others James Bonwick, James Backhouse Walker, James Watt Beattie, Cecil Allport, William Crowther and William Walker, each of whom built upon the researches of their earlier counterparts.⁶⁷ It is certain that the penal past could still be difficult, even for these newly historically-minded men. James Backhouse Walker, despite his claim for nostalgia for 'the tales of bushrangers and of the convict regime which were current forty or fifty years ago',⁶⁸ touched rarely upon convictism in his histories. The new historians investigated convict history in a climate of official suppression. In the process of transcribing records in London, James Bonwick found the necessity for 'omitting names, save where needful to the "Official History"', due to the fact that 'some objected to the mention of those who came out in the earliest times'.⁶⁹ At the Colonial Office 'censorship was a difficulty', and a 'copy of a document at the Record Office could not be removed home' until it had been censored.⁷⁰ Bonwick noted that 'occasionally true History suffered thereby', and '[e]xcision in certain cases was hard to bear'.⁷¹

Similarly, when Tasmanian Anglican Bishop, HH Montgomery, sought interviews to prepare oral history records for the new Historical and Geographical Section of the Royal Society in the late 1890s, he assured interviewees that the material was 'not for publication now, not even to be read now if you do not wish — But to be

⁶⁷ Petrow, 'The antiquarian mind', p. 67.

⁶⁸ PB Walker, JB Walker and SB Walker, *All that we inherit: being the family memorials of the Walkers and Mathers of Hobart, and the reminiscences and memories of James Backhouse Walker, solicitor and Sarah Benson Walker, the wife of George Washington Walker, banker, both of early Hobart Town, Van Diemen's Land*, Hobart, 1968, p. 93. Michael Roe observes that although Walker claimed to embrace 'the despised and nameless crowd' in the new history, having broken the 'invidious bar' of Tasmania's birth, the 'promise of these words scarcely comes good': M Roe, *The state of Tasmania: identity at Federation-time*, Hobart, 2001, p. 231.

⁶⁹ Bonwick, *An octogenarian's reminiscences*, p. 239.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Ibid. Brian Fletcher notes that when conducting negotiations over the *Historical records of Australia* the New South Wales State Government advised the Commonwealth that the Bonwick transcripts referred to matters 'that it would not be advisable to issue to the public in printed form'. It asked for the exclusion of 'all mention of convict names': BH Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, Kensington, NSW, 1993, p. 154.

kept as valuable material for the future'.⁷² He arranged for transcriptions to be placed under lock and key at the Royal Society's rooms. This degree of caution was driven to some extent by the lingering concerns about convict ancestry among a large proportion of the population, as well as a more generalised caution about defamation of those living or the families of the deceased.⁷³ This sort of caution can also be seen in local history in Victoria. When Charles La Trobe handed over a compilation of letters of Victorian pioneers to the Melbourne Public Library, he wrote that 'I think it may be a little early to make unrestricted use of the contents of these letters', but considered that in 'sending them to you ... I am securing their being deposited where they ought to go'.⁷⁴

There could also be distaste for the new 'sensationalist' approach to convict history, seen in the growing popular interest emerging from contemporary fiction. JB Walker was dismissive of Marcus Clarke's novelisation of convictism, *For the term of his natural life*, published in book form in 1874. Walker wrote in 1897 that:

In these days, when so much that is sensational is written about the iniquities and cruelties of penal discipline, it cannot be too strongly insisted that the bulk of those transported conducted themselves reasonably well and were fairly happy and well off... It is not necessary to do more than refer to the villainies of the more incorrigible of the convicts; to the state of the road gangs; to the harsh and often barbarous discipline of the penal establishments at Port Arthur and elsewhere. These have been described *ad nauseam* by writers like Marcus Clarke and others.⁷⁵

Perhaps it is significant that the collectors and amateur historians who evinced an interest in *The Hermit* in the century after its publication were not burdened by convict ancestry, and were able to indulge in historical research with no qualms

⁷² Montgomery to Charles Butler, 5 June 1899, Special and Rare Materials Collection, B9/B15, University of Tasmania Library (hereafter UTL), Hobart.

⁷³ Montgomery to Butler, 5 June 1899.

⁷⁴ TF Bride, *Letters from Victorian pioneers: being a series of papers on the early occupation of the colony, the aborigines, etc. addressed by Victorian pioneers to His Excellency Charles Joseph La Trobe, Lieutenant Governor of the colony of Victoria*, p. vi.

⁷⁵ JB Walker and PB Walker, *Prelude to Federation (1884-1898): extracts from the journal of James Backhouse Walker*, Hobart, 1978, p. 173.

about their own genealogy.⁷⁶ For these men, *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* was fascinating on many levels. The few copies were mnemonic artefacts of early Hobart, marked with the bibliographic signs of transmission from press to ownership through excisions and marginalia. The story of its production by Savery was a salutary tale of a fallen man, and the workings of the convict system. The text itself was a historical document that afforded insights into practices of the early Tasmanian press and the lifestyle and private quirks of the first generation of Hobartians.

James Bonwick was one of the first of the new historians and researchers to find an interest in *The Hermit*. Bonwick professed in his published works to finding the writing of 'contemporary history' neither 'easy nor pleasant', but considered it was important to remove the 'pall of silence' that hung over the colonial past, including the convict era.⁷⁷ While Bonwick was transcribing official Australian colonial records, including those of Van Diemen's Land, he 'ransacked the British Museum and other libraries for old books'.⁷⁸ Bonwick, who had been closely associated with Henry Melville in the 1840s in Hobart, examined the copy of *The Hermit* that had belonged to Melville and was held by the British Museum. Bonwick also noted that the 'names of parties alluded to in the publication anonymously have been inserted by someone on the margins of the pages'.⁷⁹ He devoted a section of his history of the early Australian press (published in 1890) to a description of the *Colonial Times*' serialisation, including a full transcription of Melville's notes on the identity of the 'unfortunate Hermit himself', details that he felt were certain to be of 'great interest to students of Australian literature'.⁸⁰ Bonwick found *The Hermit*, its intrinsic puzzles, and the growing mythology to

⁷⁶ It was still a stigma in Tasmanian society to have convict ancestry up until the Second World War. Alison Alexander finds that the amnesia around the convict past was in some ways positive, as it allowed Tasmanians to get on with their lives and their futures: 'amnesia can work' she observes: A Alexander, 'The legacy of the convict system', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 6, no. 1, 1998, p. 55. For a more extended discussion, see also A Alexander, *Tasmania's convicts: how felons built a free society*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2010.

⁷⁷ J Bonwick, *Port Phillip settlement*, London, 1883, p. v.

⁷⁸ G Featherstone, 'The life and times of James Bonwick', MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 1968, p. 205.

⁷⁹ Bonwick, *Early struggles of the Australian press*, p. 47.

⁸⁰ Bonwick, *Early struggles of the Australian press*, p. 46.

which he was contributing, in his own words an irresistible ‘bit of Press Romance’.⁸¹

James Backhouse Walker also took a keen interest in *The Hermit*.⁸² Walker undertook research on *The Hermit*’s authorship and the provenance of three extant copies of the book he could locate in Hobart in private and public collections. Walker read the description of the origins of *The Hermit* in James Bonwick’s *Early struggles of the Australian press* (1890). In manuscript notes, Walker collated the two slightly variant ‘keys’ to *The Hermit* that he had discovered, carefully writing out all 151 characters identifications, and comparing the two versions.⁸³ In 1892 Walker corresponded with Bonwick in England about the British Museum copy of *The Hermit*, requesting Bonwick to send a transcript of Melville’s notes, writing ‘[w]e have here two annotated copies, but Melville may give better or fuller information’.⁸⁴

Upon the receipt of Bonwick’s transcript, Walker annotated the Tasmanian Public Library’s copy of *The Hermit* with biographical details about Henry Savery. He also inserted the numbers throughout the text from McCarty Browne’s key, and added information that he had gained by interviewing an ‘old-timer’ called Donald Macmillan, who had lived in Hobart since the 1830s.⁸⁵ Walker annotated the Tasmanian Public Library’s copy of *The Hermit* with biographical details about Henry Savery gained from Melville’s copy in the British Museum, inserted the Key and numbers throughout the text from McCarty Browne’s Key, and signed and dated his annotations ‘JBW Sept 1899’, probably soon after he received the additional information on *The Hermit* from Macmillan. Significantly, he removed the Key that had been inserted in the volume by its previous owner,

⁸¹ Bonwick, *Early struggles of the Australian press*, p. 47.

⁸² ‘Death of Mr. Backhouse Walker, F.R.G.S.’ in *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania, for the years 1898-1899*, Hobart, 1900, p. lix.

⁸³ One of the Keys Walker used, that of Justin McCarty Browne, is extant in the JB Walker papers, Special and Rare Materials Collection, W9/C4/11(6), UTL, Hobart (See illustration, p. 242).

⁸⁴ JB Walker to J Bonwick, 28 May 1892, JB Walker papers, W9/C2/4, Special and Rare Materials Collection, UTL, Hobart.

⁸⁵ JB Walker, D Macmillan notes, dated 19 October 1897 and 6 September 1899, W9/C4/11(5), JB Walker papers, Special and Rare Materials Collection, UTL, Hobart. Walker made 16 pages of notes on *The Hermit* from his interview with Macmillan, including further descriptions of the specific characters.

possibly with the intent of saving descendants of the persons depicted in the book from any embarrassment.

JB Walker's manuscript notes on his researches found their way to the Mitchell Library where, around 1911, William Walker transcribed them in full.⁸⁶ As described in Chapter 4, Walker had a lively interest in Tasmania's convict period. He acquired a good collection of literature on the subject, and had made the arduous excursion to the ruins of Port Arthur and Eagle Hawk Neck in 1882.⁸⁷ William Walker added to his transcription of JB Walker's notes a transcription of the entire text of *The Hermit*, copied almost certainly from the Tasmanian Public Library copy of the book. Walker also wrote in 1911 to the Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright, who was responsible for the Sydney library's extensive collections of Australian documents and books, with information about Savery's authorship of *The Hermit*, transcribed from JB Walker's annotations in the Tasmanian Public Library copy.⁸⁸

William Walker took his *Hermit* researches overseas, making a pilgrimage in 1912 to the British Museum to view *The Hermit* copy that Henry Melville had owned.⁸⁹ Walker spent many hours in the museum, reading and transcribing documents and publications on the history of Tasmania and Australia, and looking at charts and drawings. He took the opportunity to research Henry Savery widely, using British Museum resources. Walker examined the copies of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* and *Quintus Servinton* held by the institution. He verified Bonwick's report on the notes contained in the copy of *The Hermit* and made his

⁸⁶ JB Walker, 'Notes on Tasmania and Van Diemen's Land', MLMSS A587, Mitchell Library, Sydney. I am very grateful to Mark Hildebrand for locating this manuscript.

⁸⁷ Walker went with 'Tasma Excursions': William Walker to Mary Ann Lumsden, 2 November 1882, Walker family, Tasmania. Tours to Port Arthur were very popular throughout the 19th century. The first guides at Port Arthur after the prison closed in 1877 included ex-inmates, who provided gruesome details of penal discipline and daily life to the visitors. See Young, *Making crime pay*, esp. Ch. 2.

⁸⁸ W Walker to H Wright, 1 May 1911, AS 91/2, Mitchell Library, Sydney.

⁸⁹ Walker's visit to the British Museum was part of a trend of visiting British archival sources in this period. Bonwick observed in 1895 that 'London is, with all deficiencies, the best searching-ground for contemplating colonial historians. To every Australian colonist London will ever be the Mecca of his wandering, if only for association with early history': 'The writing of colonial history', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 May 1895, p. 6.

own transcription of the handwritten notes in the British Museum's copy.⁹⁰ He noted a conversation he overheard in the British Museum Book Store regarding the sale of a copy of *Quintus Servinton* by the Australian publishers and booksellers, Angus & Robertson, to the Mitchell Library for some £15.⁹¹ Walker also examined the volume *A Genealogical and biographical record of the Savery families (Savory and Savary) and of the Severy family (Severit, Savery, Savory and Savary)* (1893) by AW Savary. His explorations of material relating to Australia held by the British Museum included dozens of volumes, of which he carefully made a bibliography, including the shelf marks of individual items. Walker recorded his compilation of data on *The Hermit* — from Melville, Bonwick, and JB Walker, and his own observations — into four notebooks, now held by the State Library of Tasmania.⁹²

In 1914-15 *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* became once again widely accessible to the public when it was serialised in the Hobart weekly newspaper the *Critic*. It is likely that Walker was influential in the decision to reprint the text, as he had connections with *Critic* editor Alexander Hume, who was also a keen local historian. The *Critic*, which had been established by Hume in 1911, promoted local history with the inclusion of regular historical commentary and serialisations of historical texts conceived to be of general interest. Personal responses to the past, and specifically memories of Hobart Town environs in the early years of settlement, were included in regular question and answer columns in the paper. The paper included a regular column written by 'The Odd Man Out', which focused on snippets of Tasmanian history. The *Critic's* writers promoted 'the local past as an enjoyed and valued possession' negotiating the 'morally tricky' task of 'recovering both "good old days" and "bad old days"'.⁹³ These columns

⁹⁰ 'Writing in the B.M. copy/ P. Dudgeon 1830/ £5.0.0 (in lead pencil)/ (in small neat handwriting)'. Walker also noted that the printer of the book was 'rubbed out' in the British Museum copy, and that 'the three volumes of Quintus Servinton [sic] are bound in one-half leather'. His own copy was in the original cloth covers. See William Walker, notebook 'The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land 4', Allport Manuscripts, box 46, folder 13, State Library of Tasmania (hereafter SLT), Hobart.

⁹¹ William Walker, notebook 'The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land 4'.

⁹² W Walker notebooks, Allport Manuscripts, box 46, folder 13, SLT, Hobart.

⁹³ R Ely, 'Sights and sounds of Hobart during the 1860s and 1870s: a townsman remembers', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 8, no. 1, 2002, p. 62.

were presented by the paper in the ‘trust that they will be read with pleasurable interest by readers of *The Critic* who take a delight in following up the ancient history of their native land’.⁹⁴

Fundamentally nostalgic in tone, the history in the *Critic* acknowledged the liberating rupture that distanced the current Tasmanian generations from those that had experienced the penal period, a period referred to as ‘ancient’ and ‘old-time’ in the *Critic*’s columns. The nostalgic mode promoted a more personal response to history, embracing historical narratives that included not only the elite (histories of explorers, governors, etc), but also the local and genealogical. In this context the ‘new old-time serial’⁹⁵ *The Hermit* and other serialisations of the early years of the colony, such as the convict narrative ‘Transported for life’, could be safely interpreted by a new generation of readers who had inherited a wariness of the past, but also an interest in finding their roots.

William Walker himself appears to have viewed his own role in the reprinting of *The Hermit* as something of an exercise in critical bibliography, shown in the evidence of his marking up the *Critic*’s *Hermit* reprints to highlight typographical errors and omissions in comparison to the 1830 text.⁹⁶ Walker pasted one nearly complete set into a volume, writing out by hand missing sections, and adding the Melville notes. Walker’s part in the re-transmission of *The Hermit*, which newly situated the text within the field of serious scientific endeavour (as bibliography), can be seen as part of what Tom Griffiths has described as ‘a growing fascination for primary sources’ in the growth of both amateur and professional history in Australia.⁹⁷

⁹⁴ *Critic*, 17 October 1913, p. 5.

⁹⁵ *Critic*, 8 August 1914, p. 5.

⁹⁶ William Walker gathered up a number of copies of the newspaper serialisation. He scrutinised the reprint in detail, annotating many of the newspaper clippings with corrections such as missing capitals and headings. These clippings, with many additional notes, are now gathered in a volume, ‘Walker’s “Century” scrap and news-cuttings book’, SLT, Hobart.

⁹⁷ Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 211.

The disposal of *The Hermit* by the Tasmanian Public Library

The Tasmanian Public Library trustees made the decision to sell the library's copy of *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* in 1916. At a trustees' meeting in August of that year it was noted that a copy of *The Hermit* had been 'discovered by the librarian' in the library collection, and the question of offering the book for sale at a price not less than £20 was raised.⁹⁸ The trustees wrote to Mitchell Librarian Hugh Wright, asking for advice on an appropriate price for the book. Wright, who had corresponded with Walker in 1911 about *The Hermit*, responded to the trustees' query with dismay, writing:

I beg to inform you that I have not heard of any copy changing hands within the last 30 years. There are very few copies of it in existence. I doubt if half a dozen copies are known and my opinion is that it is worth from £20 to £25. I sincerely hope that circumstances will not compel your Library to part with your copy. To Tasmania it is of particular interest and as years go on its value will increase.⁹⁹

The issue of the sale of *The Hermit* was not raised again until March 1918. At this time an unidentified member of the public made a verbal offer of five pounds to the deputy librarian COH Miller (who was also a library trustee) to purchase the public library's copy of *The Hermit*.¹⁰⁰ Although the offer of £5 was refused — presumably because the sum was too small — it had the consequence of drawing the trustees' attention to a market for the book. The trustees resolved to dispose of *The Hermit* 'if an offer of not less than £20 could be obtained for it'.¹⁰¹ After the decision was made, Hobart booksellers Propsting & Morris made an offer for *The Hermit*, for an exchange of the book for 'twenty five pounds worth of new books'.¹⁰² The committee formed to arrange the exchange, headed by chairman WM Williams, believed 'that £25 worth of new books would be of much more

⁹⁸ 'Public Library Trustees', *Mercury*, 30 August 1916, p. 8.

⁹⁹ H Wright to COH Miller, 5 July 1916, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰⁰ Minutes of meeting 26 March 1918, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰¹ Committee Report, in minutes of meeting 26 March 1918.

¹⁰² Ibid.

¹⁰² R Morris, of Propsting and Morris, to AJ Taylor, 18 March 1918, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

service to the Library than the [*Hermit of Van Diemen's Land*].¹⁰³ The exchange was legally acceptable under the provision of section five of 'The Tasmanian Public Library Act 1902',¹⁰⁴ and was given the approval of the Governor-in-Council¹⁰⁵ and the Town Clerk.¹⁰⁶ As the trustees only had on average £50 per annum to spend on new books, the £25 of new books that the library gained from the sale of this single slim volume was a very significant addition. By mid-1918 the book had gone, sold into private ownership on mainland Australia.¹⁰⁷

As I have described in earlier chapters, finances had been a persistent concern for the Tasmanian Public Library since its inception, with governmental grants barely meeting the costs of building maintenance and wages. Funds for book purchases were almost entirely raised by internal programs such as public lecture series, and, on rare occasions, sales of books from the collection.¹⁰⁸ Housing difficulties for books became acute in the 1890s, and numbers of 'valuable old books' were sold, raising funds for new shelving for the remaining collections.¹⁰⁹ In 1905 the trustees sold a set of John Gould's celebrated multi-volume *Birds of Australia*

¹⁰³ Committee Report, in minutes of meeting 26 March 1918.

¹⁰⁴ 2 Edw: VII, No. 9.

¹⁰⁵ Chief Secretary's Department, Hobart, to Chief Librarian and Secretary, Tasmanian Public Library, 31 May 1918, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰⁶ Town Clerk to AJ Taylor, 16 April 1918, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰⁷ In his review of collecting in Tasmania in 1948 Clive Turnbull noted that he knew of five copies of the *Hermit* listed in Ferguson, another that he had seen in England in 1936, subsequently purchased by an Australian library, and 'another copy in the possession of another Australian library was exchanged many years ago, when such things were little valued, for a mess of pottage, or its literary equivalent': C Turnbull, 'Van Diemen's land for the collector', in C Barrett (ed.), *Across the years: the lure of early Australian books*, Melbourne, 1948, p. 56.

¹⁰⁸ In a report on Hobart affairs praising Walker's first major donation in 1923, the *Australasian* noted that the trustees of the Public Library of Tasmania had 'at one time or another sold old books. The Mitchell Library in Sydney has gained by the trading, having plenty of money with which to tempt the impoverished trustees of the Hobart library.' 'Hobart notes. A gift of books', *Australasian* (Melbourne), 10 November 1923, p. 1013.

¹⁰⁹ TE Rennie, 'Early libraries in Southern Tasmania', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 1, no. 6, 1953, p. 3. John Levett described the situation more caustically in 1985: 'The collections [of the original Tasmanian Public Library 1848-69] have long been dispersed, the choicer items being sold off by an insolvent and sometimes uncaring committee over the institution's ninety-four years': J Levett, 'The Tasmanian Public Library in 1850: its members, its managers and its books' in *Books, libraries & readers in colonial Australia, papers from the forum on Australian colonial library history held at Monash University 1-2 June 1984*, Melbourne, 1985, p. 17.

(1840-48) for £100.¹¹⁰ Significantly, AJ Taylor had supported the sale by quoting verbatim the opinion of British librarian James Duff Brown on the inadvisable retention of 'bibliographical rarities' or 'books which are merely curios or scarce' by modern municipal libraries. The collection of 'specimens of typography' was a 'gigantic error', Brown considered, 'for which there is not the slightest excuse'.¹¹¹ There was 'infinitely more wisdom in spending £50 in a selection of modern works on technical subjects, which would be of immense service to living persons, than in spending the same amount in the purchase of a single rare bible which would only appeal to a few students of typography or the covetous feeling of private collectors'.¹¹²

This appeal to respected British library opinion confirms Taylor's perception of the Tasmanian Public Library as principally a utilitarian (municipal) institution, with no business forming an archive of the locality, even (or particularly when) the items under consideration were rare or expensive. In the case of the sale of *The Hermit*, a decade after the Gould sale, it is unsurprising that Taylor adopted a similar position. Taylor considered that the exchange 'thus enabled to add to the institution a few of the many books which are required to bring it up to a proper condition of usefulness to the public'.¹¹³ Taylor again claimed professional sanction for the action, noting that 'the best authorities on libraries laid down that it was a great mistake to retain one or two articles of literary value, when their value might be expended upon books for the general use of the public'.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ The library offered the book to the Parliamentary Library in Melbourne. See Minutes of meeting 1 October 1901, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 12 February 1895 - 10 March 1903, AA827/1/3, TAHO, Hobart. Minutes note that 'Mr Barton had promised to keep the matter in mind in the event of a Federal Parliament Library being formed'.

¹¹¹ JD Brown, quoted by AJ Taylor in a letter to trustees, 'Gould's Birds of Australia', 3 November 1905, inserted in Minutes of meeting 5 December 1905, Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart.

¹¹² JD Brown, quoted by AJ Taylor in a letter to trustees, 'Gould's Birds of Australia'.

¹¹³ 'Tasmanian Public Library. Report for the Year 1918', *Mercury*, 26 February 1919, p. 2.

¹¹⁴ 'A Hermit in Van Diemen's Land', *Mercury*, 6 March 1920, p. 6.

EM Miller argued against the sale of *The Hermit* when the prospect was first raised, claiming that the book was of ‘great historical interest’.¹¹⁵ At the trustees’ meeting in August 1916 he argued for the significance of the book in terms of the creation of ‘national’ archive, observing that as the library ‘was not going to peter out in a year or two ... he thought they should adopt a national policy, taking pains to preserve any books and documents of historical value and interest’.¹¹⁶ In contrast to Miller’s position, fellow trustee Alderman William Evans Bottrill argued that ‘a number of interesting and informative books could be bought for £20, so why not sell it?’ and ‘to his mind the book was worthless’.¹¹⁷ Bottrill proposed that the book be sold, but no seconder was forthcoming — an indication of some ambivalence in the attitudes of the other trustees — and the motion lapsed. A few days after the meeting, the issue was lampooned in the local press. *Mercury* correspondent ‘Mercurius’ sardonically depicted a trustees’ meeting taking place fifty years into the future, in 1966, at which a similarly political book was sold:

At a meeting of the trustees of the Taylolean Public Library yesterday, the librarian tabled a copy of twenty rare volumes of MSS., entitled “The Hermit of Elphinstone-street” or “The Letters of Dr Buttrell”. The books consist of a series of unsolicited testimonials to all and sundry, and deal with the events of the second decade of this century. Various opinions were expressed by the trustees. Mr. Miller Morris said that the work was of the highest historical importance; it threw invaluable light on the still-raging controversy between North and South, and incidentally also explained the meaning of that obsolete word “sinker”. The author was apparently a species of Gulliver, who from his great height looked down with mingled pity and contempt upon the Lilliputiana around his feet. Alderman Bottbrook declared that, to his mind, the volumes were worthless; a man who could write on so many subjects could scarcely be regarded as an authority on any. He therefore proposed that the librarian take steps to sell the manuscript at a price of not less than five shillings. The motion was carried unanimously.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵ ‘Public Library Trustees’, *Mercury*, 30 August 1916, p. 8. Reynolds and Giordano note that Miller declared at that time that the eventual sale of the volume was ‘a library tragedy’: J Reynolds and M Giordano, *Countries of the mind: the biographical journey of Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964)*, Hobart, 1985, p. 66. (Reynolds’ and Giordano’s book does not have footnotes, and there is no indication of the source of this statement.)

¹¹⁶ ‘Public Library Trustees’, *Mercury*, 30 August 1916, p. 8.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ ‘Passing notes’, by ‘Mercurius’, *Mercury*, 2 September 1916, p. 8.

In 1920, the issue of the sale of *The Hermit* was again raised in the local press, a correspondent for the *Mercury* claiming (incorrectly) that the volume had been sold to the Mitchell Library and that the Public Library of Tasmania had ‘purchased volumes of modern fiction with the money!’¹¹⁹ The journalist observed that ‘if, ten years hence, an attempt be made to again secure the book, it may cost a good deal of money’. A generalised sense of loss to Tasmania caused by the sale of the volume was expressed in the correspondent’s query: ‘[w]hat Tasmanian reader would not be interested in turning over the pages of that rare book, “The Hermit of Van Diemen’s Land”?’¹²⁰ Arguably the most significant dissenting voice against the sale of *The Hermit* was that of Hugh Wright, who had advised the trustees in strong terms against the sale as noted above. Wright identified — as the trustees did not — the material heritage value of *The Hermit*, as an artefact and as a cultural signifier.

The sale of *The Hermit* had a large and negative impact on philanthropist and collector William Walker, and his faith in the trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library. The trustees’ apparent lack of interest in Australian literature and lack of consideration for such a rare item of great interest to Tasmanians was obviously deeply infuriating: Miller tactfully understated Walker’s state of mind in the 1920s when he described Walker as having ‘cease[d] to have confidence in the Public Library Board’.¹²¹ The *Mercury* noted:

In view ... of the fact that in the past very valuable books had been disposed of by the library Trustees, Mr. Walker was naturally anxious that such a fate should not overtake any of his collection, and accordingly he wanted some undertaking that the books would never pass out of the possession of the library.¹²²

The Hermit sale had a direct effect on Walker’s stipulations for the acquisition of his Australiana collection by the public library, as discussed in Chapter 4. Convinced that the Tasmanian Public Library should hold a copy of the text of

¹¹⁹ ‘Sydney’s Mitchell Library’, *Mercury*, 5 March 1920, p. 2.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ E Morris Miller, ‘Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV. The Walker Collection’, in *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 6, 1954, p. 22.

¹²² ‘Gift to the Library. Valuable collection of books’, *Mercury*, 31 October 1923, p. 3.

The Hermit, Walker donated his press cuttings of the *Critic*'s 1914/15 serialisation to the library in late 1923. A month later Walker informed the trustees that he would present his entire collection of Tasmaniana and Australiana to the library, a gift that materially reshaped the library collection, on the condition 'that no more works dealing with Australia and Tasmania should be permitted in the future to pass from the possession of the library'.¹²³

The will to forget?

The sale of *The Hermit* was to be the last of such disposals of outstanding local heritage material, except in the case of duplicates. Walker's example of collecting and donating his Australiana, which included a proportion of convict material, was also of great significance in helping to change the collusive suppression of convict material at the Tasmanian Public Library. Walker was in many ways emulating David Scott Mitchell in Sydney in this respect. Mitchell had had no patience for the censorship and distortion of facts around the convict period. According to HCL Anderson, at the height of Mitchell's collecting passion he declared that 'I must have the damned thing, if only to show how bad it is'.¹²⁴ Bookseller Frederick Wymark quoted Mitchell as saying: 'The main thing is to get the records. We're too near our own past to view it properly, but in a few generations the convict past will take its proper place in the perspective [sic], and our historians will pay better attention to the pioneers.'¹²⁵ Both Walker and Mitchell can be seen to have exerted agency in their 'gathering up' of the documents and artefacts of the past, and ensuring the preservation of these materials in the archive that they helped to construct in the public library. But it was an act of agency against considerable public and institutional resistance. The example of the Tasmanian Public Library and *The Hermit* highlights the selectivity that shaped the institutional formation of collections in a climate of shame related to the penal past.

¹²³ Minutes of meeting 30 October 1923, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹²⁴ HCL Anderson, 'David Scott Mitchell: some reminiscences', 1920 typescript, ML A1830, p. 48, Mitchell Library, Sydney, quoted in E Ellis, 'David Scott Mitchell: A life and a bequest', in *A grand obsession: the DS Mitchell story*, Sydney, 2007, pp. 10.

¹²⁵ Frederick Wymark, 'David Scott Mitchell', 1939, typescript, ML Am121/1, Mitchell Library, Sydney, quoted in Ellis, 'David Scott Mitchell: A life and a bequest', p. 10.

This effect can be seen in all the state libraries. As noted above, Joanna Sassoon has found that disremembering the convict past profoundly marked the evolution of the state library and archives in Western Australia. In Sydney, the creation of the Mitchell Library prompted letters to the press recommending censorship of Mitchell's collection, in relation to convict material and records.¹²⁶ Brian Fletcher has noted that when provision was made for government departments to hand over papers to the Mitchell Library 'it was stipulated that "all records dealing with the antecedents of early settlers should be excluded"'.¹²⁷ Alan Ventress writes that '[m]any families in the top echelons of [New South Wales] society did not want to have the [convict] records kept because of the fear of exposure as having convict ancestors. There was quite a push to have these records destroyed'.¹²⁸ In 1912, William Sowden (trustee of the Adelaide Public Library, member of the Australian Natives Association, and active participant in the professional association of Australian librarians around Federation and President of the reformed Australian Library Association in 1928¹²⁹), referred to convicts as 'foul seed', the 'terrible leaven of immorality sent out from Great Britain'.¹³⁰ With these attitudes at the top of the public library hierarchy, as well as in the government and the community, the mentality of archiving responsibility for convict records was inevitably complicated.

Where convict records existed in the major state libraries, they were treated with particular care, due to their defamatory potential. In the Melbourne Public Library, the convict indents were kept in the strong room, rather than in either of the basement rooms typically used for the historical collections.¹³¹ Bonwick's transcriptions for the Tasmanian government remained in government care, due to concerns about the sensitive nature of some of the material, despite an application

¹²⁶ David J Jones, personal correspondence to H Gaunt, 14 October 2007.

¹²⁷ Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, p. 154.

¹²⁸ A Ventress, 'A tale of tension and neglect: state archives in New South Wales 1788-1960', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, p. 429.

¹²⁹ JP Whyte, 'From ALA to LAA - the Australian Institute of Librarians', in P Biskup and MK Rochester (eds.), *Australian library history: papers from the Second Forum on Australian Library History, Canberra, 19-20 July 1985*, Canberra, 1985, p. 122.

¹³⁰ W Sowden, *An Australian native's standpoint: addresses*, London, 1912, pp. 33, 36.

¹³¹ EW Russell and CL Farrugia, *A matter of record: a history of Public Record Office Victoria*, Nth Melbourne, 2003, p. 38.

by the Royal Society of Tasmania to curate the material.¹³² In 1935, when the National Library acquired a manuscript volume of the court proceedings featuring '[s]tirring accounts hitherto unpublished of the exploits of bushrangers and convicts' in the Hunter River district in the early nineteenth century, librarian Kenneth Binns did not make the volume available until it had been properly perused. The 'reason for the secrecy', the *Canberra Times* noted, 'is that the book contains the names of prominent families whose ancestors have convictions recorded against them'.¹³³

Robert Sharman credits Australia's convict history for the failure to establish formal archives at an earlier date, pointing to the fact that South Australia, which prided itself on never having been a convict colony, was the only state to institute archives legislation before the Second World War.¹³⁴ With the formal creation of archives in the second half of the twentieth century, convict records remained a problem, particularly in Tasmania. The convict past loomed over the operations of the archives. Censorship of government documents relating to the convict past was very real. In 1961 concern was raised by the Tasmanian library board about public access to such documents. The board suggested that 'as a safeguard for the future it is obviously desirable that the Board should formulate a directive for the Archives Officer which can be communicated to the Minister and the Cabinet so that they maybe aware of the manner in which this potentially embarrassing material is being handled'.¹³⁵ The board had to be consulted before any material relating to names and identity of convicts was published. This ruling did not change until 1972. In 1976 the board of the Archives Office petitioned the library board to remove the 'needless censorship', and the library board finally agreed in 1977. As archivist Robyn Eastley notes, '[i]t could be said that it was more

¹³² Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 229.

¹³³ 'Bushranging days. Records for National Library', *Canberra Times*, 24 July 1935, p. 4.

¹³⁴ RC Sharman, 'Introduction', in P Biskup (ed.), *Debates and discourses: selected Australian writings on archival theory, 1951-1990*, Canberra, 1995, p. 1.

¹³⁵ R Eastley, 'Using the records of the Tasmanian Convict Department', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 9, 2004, p. 140.

difficult for the records to escape from bureaucratic control that [sic] it was for most of those whose careers the records document'.¹³⁶

Books written *by* convicts form an interesting adjunct to the problematics of convict history in the public library. Reverend John Dunmore Lang's disapprobation of convict and emancipist writers in *Transportation and colonization*, written in 1837, clearly expresses the origins of this sentiment about convict writing, when he observed that it was:

...the uniform tendency or design of the writings of these [emancipist] individuals, as it has been also that of all other public writers of convict origin, in the Australian colonies, to reduce the reputable portion of the community to the same level as themselves, to abolish all the salutary distinction which the laws of God and man have erected between right and wrong; and if possible to dispossess the whole convict population of all sense of criminality and degradation.¹³⁷

In the case of *The Hermit* there was not only the possibility of historical data rising to cause shame and distress, but also the phenomenon of a member of the despised convict class transgressing cultural boundaries by writing and publishing commentary on the respectable classes. For the institution of the Australian public library, which had inherited a mission from its British antecedents of cultural and social betterment, a book written by a convict that challenged the moral and political status of the colony was potentially subversive. It was 'illegitimate' history written outside the official channels, a sort of 'underclass' historical document.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Eastley, 'Using the records of the Tasmanian Convict Department', p. 142.

¹³⁷ JD Lang, *Transportation and Colonization; or the causes of the comparative failure of the transportation system in the Australian colonies: with suggestions for ensuring its future efficiency in subserviency to extensive colonization* 1837. John West footnoted Lang's comment in his *History of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 261.

¹³⁸ Hamish Maxwell-Stewart has written about the difficulty of interpreting convict narratives, noting that 'attempts to use the words of convicts to create accurate windows on the past have proved ... problematic'. See 'Convicts', in *The companion to Tasmanian History* (online), [http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion to tasmanian history/C/Convicts.htm](http://www.utas.edu.au/library/companion%20to%20tasmanian%20history/C/Convicts.htm), accessed 12 January 2009.

Gillian Winter's analysis of attitudes to Caroline Leakey's novel *The broad arrow* supports this argument. *The broad arrow* was first published in London in 1859, and in Hobart in 1860. Like *The Hermit*, *The broad arrow* used thinly disguised real people in the text. Gillian Winter argues that contemporary audiences found this beyond 'the "bounds of discretion and good taste" to such an extent that people did not want to talk about it publicly, although they probably read it surreptitiously... People wanted to forget that transportation had only ceased six years ago in 1853'.¹³⁹ Winter observes that neither the Tasmanian Public Library nor the Launceston Public Library stocked the book in the twenty-year period after publication, although the Mechanics' Institutes of those two cities did so. However, she notes that by 1900, when the novel was reprinted in Hobart, there was new interest in identifying some of the characters, and advertisements for the book in 1908 did identify some characters.

In her study of modern biblioclasm, Rebecca Knuth has observed that the importance of preserving books as 'the common property of the nation' had evolved from Enlightenment thinking to become, by the nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries, a 'relatively stable and widespread sentiment ... embraced by society as a whole'.¹⁴⁰ In this context, Knuth finds, books are destroyed outside of war or revolution when 'the social and political environment is conflict-ridden, and when social groups become polarized, reactive, and prone to extreme gestures'.¹⁴¹ In these cases, books may be taken as 'part record, part artefact, and part symbol' of the forces or ideas that are dangerous or oppressive; 'when they are destroyed, they are symbolically standing in for something that cannot be so readily touched'.¹⁴² Although it may seem extreme to characterise the disposal of *The Hermit* in such terms, it remains true that the Tasmanian Public Library trustees chose to remove from 'safe haven' a book that had been recognised by an authority within the Australian library profession as rare and significant. Bearing

¹³⁹ G Winter, "'We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen": Caroline Leakey's Tasmanian experiences and her novel "The Broad Arrow"', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 93, no. 4, 1993, pp. 149-51.

¹⁴⁰ R Knuth, *Burning books and levelling libraries: extremist violence and cultural destruction*, Westport, CT, 2006, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ Knuth, *Burning books and levelling libraries*, p. 14.

¹⁴² Ibid.

in mind that commercial gain was certainly an aspect of the trustees' justification for the sale, the actions of the trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library can also be interpreted as a form of indirect — fiscally justified — censorship. The disposal of *The Hermit* might be considered as an act, in Tony Bennett's words, of 'institutionalized forgetting', a product of a deliberate 'practice of erasure',¹⁴³ in this case of Tasmanian's penal origins.

In the longer term the significant influence of the 'convict stain' and the societal expectations and prejudices built around this phenomenon had the effect of delaying the development of the archiving mentality for local materials in the Tasmanian Public Library. The remaining part of the chapter will address the gradual change in the library's attitude to archiving the locality as a result of changing historical consciousness in the community in the early decades of the twentieth century.

Changing attitudes to convict history and the archive

As Michael Roe has argued, Federation across Australia was directly linked with moral progress, and a cleansing of the murky convict past, especially in the former penal colony of Tasmania, where it promised 'not only equality of wealth with the richer mainland, but also hope of deeper regeneration'.¹⁴⁴ Federation intensified official suppression of the penal past. This was in great contrast to mainland Australia, where nationalists were actively consolidating and celebrating 'myths of nationhood' (discovery, first settlement, pioneering and exploring) through monuments and commemoration, and establishing an heroic and progressive pedagogy of Australian history.¹⁴⁵ Roe cites the example of the reluctant permission given by the Tasmanian Government for public access to James Bonwick's transcriptions, including a particular instance when JW Beattie wanted to access archives relating to the convict settlement at Macquarie Harbour

¹⁴³ T Bennett, 'History on the rocks', in J Frow and M Morris (eds.), *Australian cultural studies: a reader*, St Leonards, NSW, 1993, p. 232.

¹⁴⁴ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 23.

¹⁴⁵ For a discussion of these concepts see G Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history*, St. Leonards, NSW, 2000, Chs. 3, 4 & 10.

in 1900, to illustrate this point.¹⁴⁶ Lloyd Robson has written of the wilful official destruction of all the old records held at the Police Court in Campbell Town (built in 1827) when the building was demolished in 1908, and of State Minister for Education JA Lyons' recommendation that records of the convict period found in 1914 be burnt 'because Tasmanians should not remind themselves of their past'.¹⁴⁷

The muted celebration in 1903 of the centenary of white settlement in Tasmania was focused on present successes, and future progress.¹⁴⁸ Historical writing that appeared on the subject appeared in the local press was generally sombre in tone. A *Mercury* editorial suggested, for example, that the 'centenary of Tasmania sees a great work done, done we hardly know how, a fair and prosperous community evolved out of what might have been a veritable human chaos'.¹⁴⁹ After the First World War, sentiment about the convict era shifted from denial to a growing recognition of the need to reconcile with the past, and a new historical consciousness became apparent.¹⁵⁰ In 1918, the year *The Hermit* was sold from the collection of the Tasmanian Public Library, a member of the public, JW Edmunds wrote in to the *Critic* newspaper that he was:

...interested in the old-time history of this State, and often wonder a complete history of its rise and progress has not been written by some competent authority. Valuable information has been given by the late Mr. J. B. Walker, West's and Fenton's History, but there still remain a great number of blanks to fill up.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁶ Roe, *The state of Tasmania*, p. 230.

¹⁴⁷ Robson, *A history of Tasmania*, vol. II, p. 288.

¹⁴⁸ The lecture given by JW Beattie as part of the celebration, in which he discussed the convict past in the context of the lives and times of early Tasmanian governors was, in David Young's words, 'atypical' as a centenary event: Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 64.

¹⁴⁹ Editorial, *Mercury*, 12 September 1903, p. 4.

¹⁵⁰ For detailed discussion of this, particularly in relation to the convict past, see Young, *Making crime pay*; Petrow, 'The antiquarian mind'; S Petrow, 'Conservative and reverent souls: the growth of historical consciousness in Tasmania 1935-60', *Public History Review*, vol. 11, 2004, pp. 131-60; and Alexander, 'The legacy of the convict system'.

¹⁵¹ *Critic*, 22 February 1918, from press cutting in William Walker's newspaper cuttings book, Tasmaniana Library, 996.04, SLT, Hobart.

Anthony Trollope had lamented of Tasmania in 1873 that '[i]t seems hard to say of a new colony, not yet seventy years old, that it has seen the best of its days, and that it is falling into decay, ... and that for the future it must exist, — as many an old town and old country does exist, — not exactly on the memory of the past, but on the relics which the past has left behind it'.¹⁵² These relics, looked upon by Trollope as part of the mournful fabric of decay and decrepitude in the 1870s, came to have a new function for Tasmanians in the early twentieth century. Interest in curios and artefacts was a key aspect of the increasing historical consciousness of the period, couched as it was in nostalgia, and amateur enthusiasm about the local past. As Peter Fritzsche has argued, cultural artefacts act to 'localize' memory, metonymically representing the 'whole' of the past.¹⁵³ People who engaged in 'curio' gathering were encouraged to think of themselves as historical subjects, in a period of change in which such artefacts represented what was irretrievably past. Nostalgia associated with this process ameliorated to some extent the distrust of history that had existed prior to this date.

The private 'museum' of artefacts and photographs of early Tasmania formed by James Watt Beattie is an outstanding example of this type of valorised 'curio' collecting. The 'museum' was a popular destination for locals and tourists, who enjoyed viewing the artefacts, or attending lantern slide lectures by Beattie on colourful aspects of Tasmania's history. Beattie, a prominent Hobart local, was a highly regarded photographer and local historian, who had an overt interest in Tasmania's convict past.¹⁵⁴ George Porter wrote in his *Wanderings in Tasmania* (1934) that upon meeting Beattie, who was credited with having the 'best collection of curios' in Tasmania, the collector told him 'I am not popular in Hobart... people think I have secured the lion's share of the curiosities of the

¹⁵² Trollope, *Australia and New Zealand*, vol. 2, p. 1.

¹⁵³ See P Fritzsche, *Stranded in the present: modern time and the melancholy of history*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, esp. Ch. 4.

¹⁵⁴ He had been professionally photographing the Tasmanian landscape since the 1880s and became official government photographer from 1896. He had a large photographic studio and exhibition space in Hobart, initially in Elizabeth Street, and then Murray Street from 1921. Beattie, like Walker, assembled notebooks in which he recorded anecdotes and historical facts. See JW Beattie, D Wood, M Tassell, *Tasmanian photographer: from the John Watt Beattie Collection*, South Melbourne, 1981, pp. 7, 9.

district'.¹⁵⁵ Beattie was a supplier to — and associate of — many of the contemporary collectors of Tasmaniana and Australiana, including WELH Crowther, Cecil Allport¹⁵⁶ and Robert Sticht.¹⁵⁷

David Young identifies two events associated with the convict past that occurred in the late 1920s as promoting a stronger historical consciousness in the wider Tasmanian community. These were the filming of the convict-themed novel *For the term of his natural life*,¹⁵⁸ which screened with great success in Hobart in 1927, and the acquisition by state institutions of Beattie's collection in 1927 and 1933.¹⁵⁹ The sale of Beattie's main historical collection to the Launceston City Corporation in 1927 was the source of great consternation for the citizens of Hobart: 'the 'feeling was general that Hobart had lost what would have been a decided acquisition'.¹⁶⁰ The 'balance of the famous Beattie collection of relics and antiques' was retained by Beattie at his premises in Hobart.¹⁶¹

The Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in Hobart took this 'second' collection, 'a numerous assortment of veritable treasures of ancient arts and crafts of all

¹⁵⁵ G Porter, *Wanderings in Tasmania*, London, 1934, pp. 72-73.

¹⁵⁶ Tony Marshall notes that Beattie 'supplied a considerable amount of material — printed, manuscript and photographic — to [Dr. William] Crowther and Cecil Allport': T Marshall, 'Allport, Crowther and Craig: Three Tasmanian collectors and the State Library of Tasmania', unpublished conference paper, Bibliographical Society of Australia and New Zealand annual conference, Melbourne, 2004, courtesy of the author. See also 'Address' by William Crowther in *Proceedings at the handing over of the Crowther Collection of Australiana by Dr. W.E.L.H. Crowther*, 8 April 1964, State Library of Tasmania, Hobart, 1967.

¹⁵⁷ See H Gaunt, 'The library of Robert Carl Sticht', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 78, 2007, p. 7.

¹⁵⁸ The film was based on the novelisation of convict life by Marcus Clarke *His natural life* (originally published in the *Australian Journal* 1870-72, and as a novel with the title *For the term of his natural life*, in 1874). The novel, purported to be factual, has been credited with stimulating a new interest in the convict era across a diverse audience, and was reprinted many times after the 1870s. Roslynn Haynes notes that *His natural life* was to have a 'profound effect' on the way in which future generations of Australians approached convictism. She notes that while 'contemporary Tasmanians protested against what they saw as Clarke's anachronistic slur on the society, struggling to throw off its convict image and regain respectability, a more long-term damage was inscribed on the landscape', as the 'whole island was insidiously implicated in the collective guilt': Haynes, *Tasmanian visions*, esp. pp. 57, 66.

¹⁵⁹ Young, *Making crime pay*, pp. 95-96.

¹⁶⁰ 'A commendable gift', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

descriptions' on loan after Beattie's death, in 1932.¹⁶² The 'portion' of the collection on display included 'relics of the early whaling days' and 'a number of perfect specimens of native craftsmanship and fauna'. The remaining portion of the collection was housed in the basement, and included 'figures and articles in old iron and metal, priceless records and etchings, drawings, sketches, paintings, and various art treasures'.¹⁶³ The convict portion of the collection, also in the basement, was described in the context of 'an immense collection of iron work at present stored in the basement relates to the history of Port Arthur, and the early days of Hobart'. A positive spin was given to this material, in terms of the 'outstanding craftsmanship' to be found in many of the pieces, which would have future value as part of a 'technological section at the Museum'.¹⁶⁴ After the installation of the Beattie Museum in the Tasmanian Museum, William Walker reached an agreement with the Beattie Estate to purchase the collection for the people of Hobart, and formally bequeath it to the museum, as noted in Chapter 4.¹⁶⁵

The public presentation of the Beattie collection through Walker's agency served to consolidate the reputations of these two local collectors and amateur historians. Just as with Walker's book donations to the Tasmanian Public Library, the patriotic value of Walker's actions was highlighted in the public response to the gift. Patriotic connotations, officially recognised, served to legitimise the Beattie collection, including its convict components.¹⁶⁶ Walker himself, who wanted his donation to be anonymous, hoped that the Beattie acquisition would stimulate better public recognition of Beattie's 'work on behalf of the city'.¹⁶⁷ The 'Port

¹⁶² Minutes of Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Trustees 4 April 1932, in Minutes of the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Trustees, vol. 5, p. 92, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Archives, Hobart.

¹⁶³ 'A commendable gift', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8.

¹⁶⁴ 'Beattie Collection. The Walker gift', *Mercury*, 22 May 1933, p. 8.

¹⁶⁵ It is not certain what price Walker agreed to pay, but it was probably close to £1,700, the official valuation of the collection at the time. Caroline Walker, notes, Walker family, Tasmania.

¹⁶⁶ David Young also considers that the Beattie acquisition was part of a growing awareness of the financial value of the convict past to the state through tourism: 'those who wished to neuter the penal past could no longer achieve their aim by the time-honoured tactic of denial; the penal past was too palpable, its contribution to the state's economy [via tourism] too important to ignore': Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 102.

¹⁶⁷ Clive Lord to WA Brain, 8 May 1933, Walker/Beattie file, Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery Archives, Hobart.

Arthur Room' was created at the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery in 1935, and an education officer was appointed to conduct tours, lectures and demonstrations of the Beattie collection. David Young writes that new exhibits were acquired to supplement the original group, and asserts that Walker's gift not only 'reawakened interest in the past' but 'simultaneously stimulated investment in the future'.¹⁶⁸ The *Mercury* was of the opinion that the Beattie collection was a 'practically incalculable value as a link with the early history of the State and the mode of life and customs of its inhabitants'.¹⁶⁹

The disposal of *The Hermit of Van Diemen's Land* from the Tasmanian Public Library collection passed out of institutional memory in a remarkably short period. EB John, who had started at the Tasmanian Public Library as a volunteer in the early 1920s and was added to the library payroll in 1926¹⁷⁰ wrote an article designed to promote the library's Tasmaniana and Australiana collections for the *Mercury* in 1940.¹⁷¹ John outlined in his article a variety of what could be considered 'Tasmanian Classics'.¹⁷² Among other significant texts associated with Tasmania, such as *Quintus Servinton*, and the pirated Launceston edition of Charles Dickens' *Pickwick papers* (all from the Walker collection), John mentioned *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land*. The latter was, in 1940, represented in the library only by the newsprint compilation given by William Walker in 1923. John wrote that:

[u]nfortunately, the Tasmanian Public Library does not possess copies of all these works. It would be very proud, for instance, to have the small 154-page booklet of the "Hermit in Van Diemen's Land" reprinted from the "Colonial Times" in 1829, instead of the modern newsprint copy it owns ... but these acquisitions now seem beyond the realm of possibility.¹⁷³

¹⁶⁸ Young, *Making crime pay*, p. 100.

¹⁶⁹ 'A commendable gift', *Mercury*, 20 May 1933, p. 8. WELH Crowther was an admirer of Beattie's historical collection, advocating in the *Mercury* the placement of parts of the collection in the museum in December 1925. Significantly, however, Crowther only suggested the display of the artefacts relating to Tasmanian governors; he considered that the convict collection should be discarded: Petrow, 'The antiquarian mind', p. 72.

¹⁷⁰ Minutes of meeting June 1926, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁷¹ EB John, 'Tasmanian classics some historic volumes', *Mercury*, 3 February 1940, p. 3.

¹⁷² Ibid.

¹⁷³ Ibid.

The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land's value as both artefact and text, as a 'first' and as a story of origins, was rekindled in the second half of the twentieth century. EM Miller published the first scholarly assessment of Henry Savery's *Quintus Servinton* in 1958, conceptualising both *Quintus* and *The Hermit* as historically important Australian incunabula and complaining of the tendency in Australian literary scholarship 'to mark down our pioneer writings and to treat them merely as passable in a historical sense'.¹⁷⁴ Cecil Hadgraft edited a reprint of *The Hermit* in 1964, allowing the text to reach a wider audience beyond the few copies in state libraries. Hadgraft included a copy of the Key to the characters in the reprint, with brief biographical data on each person. The discovery of another Key at the Archives Office of Tasmania in the 1990s prompted historian Michael Roe to publish further on this aspect. Roe considered the new biographical evidence increased the value of *The Hermit* to the Tasmanian community by 'giving insights into Van Diemen's Land'. Roe characterised *The Hermit* as a historical resource that had 'not been sufficiently recognized in recent years'.¹⁷⁵

In 1964, the State Library of Tasmania was fortunate to regain for its collections a copy of *The Hermit*, donated by Dr William Crowther. A second copy came to the library with the donation of the collection of Henry Allport in 1965. The Tasmanian Public Library's copy of *The Hermit*, sold into private ownership in 1918, was bequeathed to the National Library of Australia in Canberra in 1973 from the estate of JA Ferguson, compiler of the seminal *Bibliography of Australia*.¹⁷⁶

¹⁷⁴ Miller, *Australia's first two novels*, p. 2.

¹⁷⁵ M Roe, 'Henry Savery's "The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land": a supplementary note', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 44, no. 2, 1997, p. 91.

¹⁷⁶ The current location of the Tasmanian Public Library's *The Hermit* copy was confirmed in the course of research for the thesis, by matching descriptions of the transcription in the front cover of Tasmanian Public Library's *The Hermit* made by JB Walker ('Notes on Tasmania and Van Diemen's Land', MLMSS A587, Mitchell Library, Sydney) with the transcriptions in the copy held by the National Library of Australia. It had been thought that the National Library copy had come (via John Ferguson) from JB Walker's private collection: Andrew Sergeant, email correspondence to the author, 9 April 2008.

Conclusion

Prompted by the reception of the Walker Collection of Tasmaniana into the library between 1923 and 1933, and changing community attitudes to the past, the Tasmanian Public Library underwent a dramatic change of attitude to its local literature and history collections in the decades after the disposal of *The Hermit*. Responding to growing historical consciousness, in the forms of nostalgia to the past, antiquarianism, 'heritage' tourism, and the growth of professional history, the Tasmanian Public Library developed greater confidence in its new archival role in the 1930s, despite ongoing financial problems that were not resolved until the formation of the State Library of Tasmania in 1943. These developments are described in the final chapter of the thesis.

As David Young has argued, the convict past continued to loom over Tasmanian society well into the second half of the twentieth century. This was also the case in other parts of Australia, particularly those states with a penal history. Tom Griffiths noted in 1996 that the 'widespread embarrassment about convict origins has dramatically diminished since the 1960s, but some descendants of First Fleeters still feel that they are on the nose'.¹⁷⁷ At the same time, as Bruce Bennett asserts, 'Australia's origins as a convict settlement have become as important a defining element in versions of "the Australian story" as Puritan settlement has been in "the American story"',¹⁷⁸ capturing popular imagination through popular films, television documentaries, novels and well-funded redevelopments of historic sites. In Tasmania, the most profound aspect of this lingering of the past in the present has been the evolution of the convict tourism industry, with sites such as Port Arthur in the south, and Sarah Island in Macquarie Harbour on the West Coast generating significant income for the state.¹⁷⁹ Young finds that 'a tamed and commodified convict past which offends no one and means nothing' is everywhere to be seen.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁷ Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 224.

¹⁷⁸ B Bennett, 'Ego, sight and insight in convict fiction by Henry Savery and John Boyle O'Reilly', *Journal of Australian Colonial History*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2000, p. 28.

¹⁷⁹ See Young, *Making crime pay*, especially pp. 149-56.

¹⁸⁰ Young, *Making crime pay*, p.152.

At the same time, academic interest in interpreting the penal origins of Australia has dramatically increased since the 1970s. Rich and searching analyses of this aspect of Australia's history are possible largely through historical interpretation of the documents and books acquired by Australia's public libraries and archives in the past decades. This chapter has demonstrated that this acquisition process was neither simple nor uncontested, and that recognition of the absences in the archives is an important aspect of the history of their formation.

CHAPTER 6:

‘How to encourage our literature’: National fictions in the Australian public library

Introduction

Chapter 6 of the thesis addresses the interactions between Australian creative literature and the Australian public library. Earlier chapters have addressed changing attitudes in the Australian public library towards local and national manuscript and documentary written ‘heritage’, and Australian *non-fictional* literature. These chapters found that the institution of the public library responded to wider societal influences, emerging from the community and the nation, in the choices that were made about the type of material that it was seen appropriate and necessary to collect, promote and archive. These influences varied according to changing sentiments relating to history and memory, nationalism and patriotism, and perceptions of origins and futures. The chapters have found that the public library was a responsive institution, able to shift with the place, and the times. In particular, in Australia it has evolved as an institution marked intrinsically by nationalism, by a need to honour its mandate to universality and concurrently to nurture partiality and exceptionalness. Chapter 6 explores this characterisation in relation to national fictions.

An understanding of the social contexts out of which other types of Australian writings have emerged has been important in explicating the role of the public library in the collection and promotion of this material. Similarly, this chapter finds that the context for the production of Australian creative literature is vital in explicating the intersections between national fictions and public libraries. Australian fictions, viewed historically, have been described as evolving from a ‘network of social institutions and practices’.¹ David Carter and Gillian Whitlock, in offering this description, argue that Australian literature should be studied, not as if it were an ‘organism or a simple aggregate of texts’, but rather through the many practices which fed its evolution: ‘how writing comes before readers, how it

¹ D Carter and G Whitlock, ‘Institutions of Australian literature’, in J Walter (ed.), *Australian studies: a survey*, Melbourne, 1989, pp. 110-12.

comes before them as “Australian literature”, and how it is read in a given social context’; how it emerges from literary and ideological influences such as ‘contemporary notions of “literature” and “nationhood”’, as well as particularities of publication and distribution, the specific social groupings of those involved in these activities, and the nature of the reading public.² Historically, the public library seems likely to have played a role in a number of these social contexts, most obviously in providing national literature to the reading public as part of free library collections.

However, the nature and scope of the role of the public library in the network of institutions and practices described by Carter and Whitlock as Australian creative literature has not been examined to any great extent, and many questions remain.³ To what degree did the major state libraries promote the creative literature of their own nation? How did this role change over the period under discussion in this thesis? In what ways did the public library interrelate with other parts of the ‘network’ of Australian literature? How might cultural nationalism and more generalised patriotism have coloured attitudes by Australian library professionals to national fictions, in comparison to non-national fictions? How did the increasing investment in the idea of nation experienced in the Australian public library, specifically in an archival role for Australian history and letters, operate when challenged by entrenched negativity towards fiction in the wider library profession? This chapter explores these questions to explicate the function of the Australian public library in the network of institutions and practices that constituted Australian literature, focusing on the arc of time from the first period

² Carter and Whitlock, 'Institutions of Australian literature', p. 110.

³ Anette Bremer and Martyn Lyons have addressed attitudes to Australian literary culture in 'Mechanics' Institute libraries: A Bremer and M Lyons, 'Mechanics' Institute libraries - the readers demand fiction', in M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, pp. 209-25. Articles that address Australian fiction in public libraries include P Mansfield, 'Changing attitudes to fiction in nineteenth-century Australian public libraries', in BJ McMullin (ed.), *Instruction and amusement: papers from the Sixth Australian Library History Forum, Monash University, 1 November 1995*, Melbourne, 1996, pp. 103-13, and E Webby, 'Not reading the nation: Australian readers of the 1890s', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2006, pp. 308-18. A key international study addressing national fictions in public libraries is M Hammond, "'The Great Fiction Bore': free libraries and the construction of a reading public in England, 1880-1914", *Libraries & Culture*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2002, pp. 83-108.

of nationalism through to the second period, concluding at the end of the 1930s. It is predicated on the assumption that an examination of the intersection between the attitudes of library professionals, intellectuals, authors and the reading public to Australian fiction can offer valuable insights into the coevolution of Australian literature *and* Australian public libraries. In this chapter I use the term ‘Australian creative literature’ to principally include fiction/novels, short stories, poetry, and drama produced by Australians. I have also used the term ‘national fictions’ interchangeably, evoking as it does the plurality of genres of national fiction, as well as connotations of cultural narratives which set creative literature apart from the other types of literature the public library collected.⁴

The chapter first outlines the international context of debates on the provision of fiction in the public library, using the recent body of historical scholarship on changing attitudes to fiction in the public library in Britain and North America. Australian public library attitudes to non-national fictions are then explored. At the core of the chapter is an examination of changing attitudes and practices towards Australian fiction in the major state public libraries, in the wider context of literary nationalism, attitudes of readers to Australian creative fiction and the complexities of ‘cultural cringe’. The reception of the fiction component of William Walker’s *Australiana* at the Tasmanian Public Library forms the key example. E Morris Miller’s role in promoting Australian creative literature in the Australian public library is examined, including his active influence at the Tasmanian Public Library, his involvement in the reformed Australian Library

⁴ Graeme Turner used the term definitively in the Australian context in the title of his *National fictions: literature, film, and the construction of Australian narrative*, first published in 1986 (Sydney, Allen & Unwin). In public libraries in the period under discussion there was some variety of the use of terms such as literature, fiction, novels, etc. At the Melbourne Public Library in 1905 ‘literature’ included poetry, drama, essays, and speeches but not ‘novels’, which were classed separately with ‘fiction’. See for example ‘Public Lending Library. Demand for fiction’, *Argus* (Melbourne), 30 December 1905, p. 14. At the Tasmanian Public Library ‘literature’ consisted of dictionaries, encyclopaedias, catalogues, books of quotations, author’s complete works, histories of literature, philology, theatre and opera, essays and letters from all nations. See ‘Return indicating percentages of books in the reference and lending libraries and the combined libraries’, inserted in Minutes of meeting 25 July 1916, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915–25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

Association in the 1920s and 1930s, and his authorship of the major bibliography *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*.

In the final section of the chapter, the nature and degree of public engagement with library provision of Australian literature is examined through the activities of public intellectuals, writers and literary bodies such as the Australian Literature Society. The chapter concludes by demonstrating the large attitudinal shift toward national fictions in the public library, moving from early indifference at the turn of the twentieth century to active engagement stimulated by a new period of Australian literary nationalism from the 1930s.

The ‘fiction debate’ in the international public library

In the latter part of the nineteenth century the genre of the novel was frequently considered a challenge to the accepted moral and educational role of the public library.⁵ As library historian Mary Hammond observes, fiction was accused of ‘softening’ the mind and making it ‘impervious to better things’.⁶ Debates in the British public library about the public consumption of fiction emerged from wider anxieties about class, gender and morality and, Hammond notes, ‘for some time the library as public space was anxiously viewed as an attempt to transgress the boundaries of any or all or these’.⁷ Public libraries typically maintained a clear distinction between ‘literary fiction’ that included the canon of authors and works that were acceptable, and ‘popular fiction’ that was seen as inappropriate for acquisition by a publicly-funded institution. In order to sustain traditional moral and intellectual standards, active censorship of fiction was commonplace, although in the absence of specific guidelines for censorship, librarians typically found assessment of newly published creative literature problematic.⁸ In the British context, as Robert Snape observes, there was no co-ordination on a national level on what should or should not be restricted, so that the role of moral

⁵ Hammond, ‘The Great Fiction Bore’, p. 92.

⁶ Hammond, ‘The Great Fiction Bore’, p. 87.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ R Snape, ‘Home reading’, in M Kinnell and RP Sturges (eds.), *Continuity and innovation in the public library: the development of a social institution*, London, 1996, p. 71.

guardian was placed firmly at the local level.⁹ Public libraries at this time typically set themselves in opposition to circulating and commercial libraries, which profitably exploited the popular interest in fiction.¹⁰

As social attitudes to leisure became more liberal towards the end of the nineteenth century, positive approaches to fiction in the public library became more common.¹¹ Opinion shifted in the library profession and among influential figures in the world of library provision, for a variety of reasons. Alistair Black notes in the British context that ‘Utilitarianism came to accept some traditional and aesthetic learning as productive of utility’, and in this context found in the higher novel a ‘useful art’.¹² More librarians came to believe, with Utilitarians, that quality creative and imaginative literature had the potential to elevate the reader.¹³ Philanthropist Andrew Carnegie, whose dislike of fiction in public libraries was well known by library administrators in the nineteenth century, came to believe that encouraging the reading of fiction in a non-reading community would inevitably lead readers to ‘higher’ reading practices. In 1902, at the opening of a branch of the Liverpool Library at Toxteth in England, he was quoted as saying ‘I have hinted time and again whether it might not be necessary to provide that no fiction should be admitted to a free library unless it were a year old’, but ‘I have changed my views upon that point, and I think there is no use in providing a step ladder for aspiring to climb, if you make the first step of that ladder too high’.¹⁴

⁹ Snape, ‘Home reading’, pp. 78-79. Snape writes that it would be an ‘overstatement’ to suggest that this amounted to a ‘class struggle over the control of leisure through the library’, but notes that the ‘censorship of popular fiction was certainly something that working-class readers perceived as being against their interests and wishes, and it did not pass without notice or comment’ (pp. 79-80).

¹⁰ Michael Harris argues that one of the reasons governments had uniformly agreed that the provision of a free public library service was desirable by the early twentieth century was the recognition of the need to compete effectively with the circulating libraries and their high circulation of ‘unhealthy’ fiction: MH Harris, *History of libraries in the western world*, Metuchen, NJ, 1995, p. 157.

¹¹ Snape, ‘Home reading’, p. 76.

¹² A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996, p. 75.

¹³ Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 258.

¹⁴ P Cowell, *Liverpool public libraries: a history of fifty years*, Liverpool, 1903, p. 180.

The demand for fiction in the community grew dramatically in this period, further influencing public library philosophy and practice. By the beginning of the First World War, the public library had shifted to a more accepting attitude towards a greater variety of fiction, increasingly accepting more 'popular' in addition to standard 'canonical' forms into its collections. This was part of the imperative to influence public use of leisure time in positive directions.

Hammond argues that while British public libraries in this period were not responsible for the formation of the late-nineteenth-century literary canon, they did help both to 'engender and to perpetuate it'.¹⁵ Hammond observes that the debate about fiction at the turn of the century in Britain focused on 'exactly how a new work that deserved to be included in the canon might be recognized', even as library committees continued to censor the increasingly large quantities of fiction produced.¹⁶ There was also a new association of reading practices, related to certain types of novel accepted in the public library, with 'cultural capital'.¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu's theorisation of cultural production is central to this concept.¹⁸ Bourdieu describes principles of legitimacy, in which 'consecrations' (high art, bourgeois, or popular) are won for certain types of literature. These consecrations change over time, with the 'modification of the chances of access to the literary field' and external changes related to production/authorship.¹⁹ As Hammond argues, the conservative nature of public library selection policy had the concomitant effect of ensuring that those works of contemporary fiction that *were* accepted into public library collections achieved 'a certain social legitimisation' as a result of the 'worthy, patriarchal, and middle class' connotations of the institution.²⁰ Thomas Augst makes a similar point in relation to the public library in North America, arguing that public libraries helped to legitimise fiction as a 'medium of "modern education"' in the early twentieth century by promoting and

¹⁵ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', p. 105.

¹⁶ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', p. 104.

¹⁷ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', p. 105.

¹⁸ See P Bourdieu, 'The field of cultural production', in D Finkelstein and A McCleery (eds.), *The book history reader*, London, 2006, pp. 99-120.

¹⁹ Bourdieu, 'The field of cultural production', pp. 105-106.

²⁰ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', p. 93.

actively directing reading for leisure.²¹ In the process they contributed to the emergence and consolidation of aesthetic values for judging fiction's moral influence.

The public library did not abandon its tendencies to paternalism and social engineering in engaging more actively with popular fiction. Rather, as Alistair Black has argued, what occurred was institutional adaptation involving negotiation and compromise, representing a 'settlement between the two alternatives of promoting the public library as either purely élitist or radically popular'.²² In Australia, as this chapter will argue, this negotiation was made more complex by the intersection of emerging cultural nationalism and residual 'cultural cringe'.

Literary nationalism, Australian fiction and Australian readers

As Richard Nile and Jason Ensor have noted, '[e]mbedded in the concept of Australian literature is a deeply held assumption that the Australian novel is closely associated with the experience of being Australian... Literature thus conceived simultaneously critiques and evaluates, modifies and changes, the idea of nation'.²³ This fundamental assumption has historical roots, traceable to the stimulation of critical and popular attention to national fictions in the periods of intense literary nationalism experienced in Australia. The principal periods of productive literary nationalism occurred in the lead-up to Federation in the 1890s, and the post-depression period of the 1930s into the 1940s, driven in both cases by writers and intellectuals.²⁴ The writing of the 1890s, as Patrick Buckridge has argued, formed 'a crucial foundation for the literary themes and practices of

²¹ T Augst, 'Faith in libraries: public libraries, liberalism, and the civil religion', in T Augst and KE Carpenter (eds.), *Institutions of reading: the social life of libraries in the United States*, Amherst, 2007, p. 177.

²² Black, *A new history of the English public library*, p. 191. Thomas Augst also considers the struggle over the place of fiction as making the North American public library into a 'battleground over the purpose and form of reading in modern life': T Augst, 'Introduction', in Augst and Carpenter, *Institutions of reading*, p. 4.

²³ R Nile and J Ensor, 'The novel, the implicated reader and Australian literary cultures, 1950-2008', in P Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2009, pp. 523-24.

²⁴ See, for example, P Buckridge, 'Nationality and Australian literature', in Walter, *Australian studies*, pp. 136-55.

subsequent generations of writers'.²⁵ The radical nationalist literature of the 1890s, which was promoted by widely-read publications such as the *Sydney Bulletin*, confirmed national stereotypes of the free-spirited and egalitarian Australian based on bush mythology, and was a crucial part of the increasing Australian 'cultural fetishism' emerging in the period.²⁶ The literary national school of the 1890s actively sought to produce a distinctively Australian culture, and was an aspect of the growing professionalisation of Australian writers seeking to popularise their vision.²⁷

Local conditions in this first nationalistic period were, however, not conducive to success, with both economic and attitudinal hindrances. There were few Australian publishers, and the 'colonial editions' market that produced British books cheaply for the colonies worked against competitive Australian production. Australian newspapers rarely purchased original Australian creative work, typically publishing syndicated British material. As Robert Dixon has noted '[n]o matter how great their talent, an Australian writer was nothing until "recognized" abroad'.²⁸ Henry Lawson wrote bitterly in 1900 that the 'position of purely Australian literature is altogether hopeless in Australia — there is no market'.²⁹ Paradoxically, the very stereotypes promoted by the nationalist writers tended to work against an active reading culture. Patrick Buckridge argues that the 'national type', focused by the *Bulletin* writers around the character of the bushman, exacerbated the perception of Australia being a 'non-reading' nation, as the bushman was characterised as having a 'disdain for books and bookish people'.³⁰

²⁵ Buckridge, 'Nationality and Australian literature', p. 146.

²⁶ R White, *Inventing Australia: images and identity 1688-1980*, Sydney, 1981, p. 73.

²⁷ White, *Inventing Australia*, p. 106.

²⁸ R Dixon, 'Australian fiction and the world republic of letters, 1890-1950', in Pierce, *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, p. 228.

²⁹ Henry Lawson 'Letter to Earl Beauchamp', 19 January 1900, in S Alomes and C Jones, *Australian nationalism: a documentary history*, North Ryde, NSW, 1991, p. 100. Mark Askew writes that nationalist authors such as Henry Lawson 'despised the ordinary Australian reader for not buying books by Australians': M Askew, 'Reading the Australian reading public: some historical considerations', in J Macleod and P Buckridge (eds.), *Books and reading in Australian society*, Nathan, Qld, 1992, pp. 137-38.

³⁰ P Buckridge, 'Bookishness and Australian literature', *Script & Print*, vol. 30, no. 4, 2006, p. 234.

A further factor which problematised the establishment of a thriving local literary culture was the strength of Anglophile culture and the concomitant 'cultural cringe' dismissal of Australian authors who had not achieved acceptance into the British market.³¹ Complex notions of cultural deficiency and colonial inferiority marked Australian literature for many decades, inhibiting both local production and consumption. 'Why is it that London should continue to be our literary centre? Would it not be natural for the Australians to seek in one or other of their own capitals the literary pabulum which they desire?' asked an editorial in the *Sydney Morning Herald* in 1893.³² The reason, the editor concluded, was that 'on the subject of books' the Australian reader was 'apt to be self-conscious and distrustful', requiring the confirmation of success on the British market before accepting a local product. As a 'double-standard' applied by local critics to Australian writing, cultural cringe made an early appearance in HG Turner and A Sutherland's *The development of Australian literature* (1898) in which the authors disseminated a timid and defensive critical attitude, a perception that Australian literature could not expect to be judged in the same arena as British work.³³

This attitude persisted in the following decades. Australian literary commentator George Mackaness summarised it in 1935 as being 'one-eyed in two and opposite ways. There is the one-eyed individual — until recently only too common — who can see nothing good at all in anything written or published in Australia; his one-eyed companion sees our literature in exaggerated perspective, the wonderful output of a wonderful people'.³⁴ Nationalist bishop EH Burgmann wrote in 1944 that there was in Australia 'a constant comparison between things in the old countries and things Australian, and things Australian are always represented in such comparisons as uncouth, or as not in the same class as the same things in the exile's homeland'.³⁵ The term 'cultural cringe' itself was first explicitly defined in 1958 by social commentator AA Phillips, in his *The Australian tradition: studies*

³¹ Alomes and Jones, *Australian nationalism*, p. 94.

³² Editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 28 January 1893, p. 9.

³³ P Pierce, 'The critical reception, 1891-1945', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 360.

³⁴ G Mackaness, 'The future of Australian literature', *Age* (Melbourne), 23 February 1935, p. 4.

³⁵ EH Burgmann, *The education of an Australian*, Sydney, 1944, quoted in Alomes and Jones, *Australian nationalism*, p. 278.

in a colonial culture. Phillips defined the ‘cringe’ as a ‘tendency to make needless comparisons. The Australian reader, more or less consciously, hedges and hesitates, asking himself, “Yes, but what would a cultivated Englishman think of this?”’³⁶ Focusing on Australian writing and readers, Phillips argued that an effect of the ‘cringe’ was not only the estrangement of the ‘Australian intellectual’, but also the unfair criticism directed towards the Australian community that “‘the Australian’ did not read, that his home was a bookless monument to Philistinism’ despite statistical evidence to the contrary.”³⁷

Recent historiography on reading practices in colonial and early-twentieth-century Australia demonstrates that as a result of these compound factors, readership for local creative literature was small. Australians were high consumers of literary and popular fiction³⁸ but followed a ‘western and especially British literary canon, including Shakespeare, the Romantic poets, and nineteenth-century novelists like Dickens, Scott, and Thackeray’.³⁹ Elizabeth Webby has demonstrated that Australian literature has always ‘more readily found writers than readers’ in her studies of nineteenth-century reading groups such as the ‘Nil Desperandum Society’ in Hobart, the Sydney-based Women’s Literary Society, and the Australasian Home Reading Union.⁴⁰ On the rare occasions when Australian literature was discussed at groups such as these, the focus was on poetry,

³⁶ AA Phillips, ‘The cultural cringe’, quoted in Alomes and Jones, *Australian nationalism*, p. 305.

³⁷ Phillips, ‘The cultural cringe’, p. 307.

³⁸ E Webby, ‘Fiction, readers and libraries in early colonial New South Wales and Van Diemen’s Land’, in *The culture of the book: essays from two hemispheres in honour of Wallace Kirsop*, Melbourne, 1999, pp. 366-73. Webby observes that reading of popular fiction was not confined to women, children or the lower classes, and ‘clearly was one of the major forms of entertainment enjoyed by the male elite of both Sydney and Hobart in the first half of the nineteenth century’ (p. 373).

³⁹ M Lyons, ‘Reading practices in Australia’, in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 352. An alternative view, Tim Dolin has argued that it is important to consider the degree to which Australian themes arose in British novels in the nineteenth century, so that Australian readers were in some sense ‘reading themselves’ in this way: T Dolin, ‘First steps toward a history of the mid-Victorian novel in colonial Australia’, *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2006, pp. 286-87.

⁴⁰ See Webby, ‘Not reading the nation: Australian readers of the 1890s’, pp. 308, 310. Susann Liebich has found that the Home Reading Union did include some Australian literature in its recommended courses for reading, including works by Henry Kendall, Rolf Boldrewood and AL Gordon. See Susann Liebich, ‘Educating adult readers’, unpublished conference paper, Society for the History of Reading, Authorship and Publishing, Annual Conference, Oxford, June, 2008, courtesy of the author.

generally of a period before the nationalist poetry of the 1890s.⁴¹ In spite of exhortations of literary nationalists from the 1850s to the 1950s that a 'National Literature' was 'imperative for cultural development and integration',⁴² these Anglophile reading practices continued into the twentieth century. A further challenge to the construction of a large readership for Australian literature was the influx of American fiction in the early twentieth century. In 1909 the Melbourne *Argus* wrote hopefully that the 'prejudice against an Australian book' held by the Australian reader was 'dying', but considered that the new openness to local production was severely challenged by the American popular fiction 'invasion'.⁴³ 'The era of prosperity for the Australian author will only dawn in earnest when he can command as wide a public as can his American fellow-craftsman', the correspondent concluded.

Martyn Lyons writes that the 'vast majority' of Australian readers had not been persuaded to read serious Australian fiction until after the Second World War.⁴⁴ More enthusiasm for Australian literary production among readers emerged in the early twentieth century through the growth of popular ephemeral fiction. Typified by the popular series published by the New South Wales Bookstall Company, this fiction was crucial to the evolution of the new readership for Australian fiction. Sales of popular Australian novels grew markedly, and were further encouraged by full-page advertisements and serialisations of this fiction in popular literary magazines such as the *Lone Hand*. As Carol Mills observes, these magazines and the Bookstall Series together were 'at the forefront in providing their readers with

⁴¹ Webby, 'Not reading the nation', p. 317.

⁴² Askew, 'Reading the Australian reading public', pp. 137-38.

⁴³ 'What we read', *Argus*, 10 May 1909, p. 8.

⁴⁴ M Lyons, 'The book trade and the Australian reader in 1945', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, pp. 404. It is important to note, however, that some scholars have argued for the importance of local fiction in defining identity in Tasmania. Lloyd Robson writes that Tasmanian writers, such as GB Lancaster (Edith Joan Lyttleton), Roy Bridges and (to a lesser extent) Bernard Cronin, were preoccupied with the past, writing historical novels or historical romances set in Tasmania's colonial past, based on serious research into archival records and interviews with older Tasmanian citizens: LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania volume II: colony and state from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1991, p. 383. Peter Bolger notes that 'the novels by Caroline Leakey and James Bonwick with settings in Hobart added to reading the flavour of local participation': PF Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Canberra, 1973, p. 188. For a wide ranging discussion of literature and identity in Tasmania, see RD Haynes, *Tasmanian visions: landscapes in writing, art and photography*, Sandy Bay, Tas., 2006.

a new kind of indigenous reading'.⁴⁵ This popular fiction 'written by Australians for Australians', typically directed at the growing urban communities, thrived through the 1920s and 1930s. It encouraged, in Mills' opinion, a 'generalised patriotism' linked to nostalgia for the bygone bush pioneering days that had inspired the nationalist literature of the 1890s.⁴⁶ However, this type of fiction was closely geared to the circulating library market, and its growing production did not significantly impact upon public library collections. As Carol Mills notes, '[p]resumably copies were supplied to libraries which were entitled to them under legal deposit, but if so they were not always kept, certainly not comprehensively'.⁴⁷ When Edmund la Touche Armstrong observed in 1902 that '[c]heap books are not for libraries, they are for the casual reader, not for preservation', he expressed a common assessment of the inappropriateness of ephemeral fiction for the major reference collections.⁴⁸

The split between 'high' literature and popular fiction continued to be great until the late 1940s, at which time highbrow and popular authors came to share similar territory as 'Australian novels'.⁴⁹ As Robert Dixon notes, this 'middlebrow' culture emerged as a product of institutions such as subscriber book clubs, book societies, and bestseller lists that were active in the 1920s and 1930s.⁵⁰ These factors, operating within the broadly conceived institution of Australian literature, evolving nationalism and patriotism, influenced changing attitudes toward national fictions in the Australian public libraries, building on received attitudes to fiction in general as discussed below.

⁴⁵ CM Mills, 'The bookstall novel: an Australian paperback revolution 1904-1946', in D Walker, J Horne, M Lyons (eds.), *Books, readers, reading (Australian cultural history, number 11)*, Geelong, Vic., 1992, pp. 98-99.

⁴⁶ CM Mills, *The New South Wales Bookstall Company as a publisher, with notes on its artists and authors and a bibliography of its publications*, Canberra, 1991, p. 12.

⁴⁷ Mills, *The New South Wales Bookstall Company as a publisher*, p. 16.

⁴⁸ ELT Armstrong, 'The proposed Federal Library of the Commonwealth', in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, p. 65.

⁴⁹ For a discussion of this, see Dixon, 'Australian fiction and the world republic of letters', pp. 246-47.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

The Australian public library and fiction 1890s-1920s

Australian public library attitudes to the provision of fiction in general closely replicated those of Britain and North America. In his study of attitudes to fiction in the Australian public library, Peter Mansfield finds that the debate about the relevance of fiction had reached an impasse by the 1890s and most Australian public libraries began circulating larger quantities of fiction than had been the case earlier in the nineteenth century. Neither the 'optimists' (who considered fiction as potentially elevating and encouraging of a higher reading habit) nor the 'pessimists' (who considered all forms of fiction inappropriate for public library collections) could 'claim a clear victory in terms of their ability to influence the reading tastes of the community', Mansfield writes.⁵¹

Debates at the Australian professional conferences at the end of the nineteenth century and early twentieth century unsurprisingly reflected opinions in the British library profession. In his paper 'Fiction in public libraries', delivered to the 1896 national conference of the Library Association of Australasia, educationist and Shakespeare enthusiast John Purves Wilson took the 'optimist' position.⁵² In his opinion, fiction was popular and abundant but not necessarily pernicious. 'We may take it for granted that [the Melbourne Public Library] should admit fiction', Wilson observed, but continued by stressing the importance of library control of the quality and quantity of novels stocked.⁵³ At the 1898 national conference, two papers addressed the 'fiction' question. In 'The place of fiction in public libraries', Mungo MacCallum, professor of modern languages and literature at the University of Sydney, argued that the question of fiction in public libraries was of greater concern in the colonies even than in Britain. While

⁵¹ Mansfield, 'Changing attitudes to fiction in nineteenth-century Australian public libraries', p. 112. Martyn Lyons observes that for Australian librarians 'the only value sensational fiction had was as a form of bait to familiarize borrowers with the practice of reading. They cherished the illusion that readers would mature, and would soon demand the technical and ennobling works intended for their edification': M Lyons, 'Texts, books, and readers: which kind of cultural history?', in Walker, Horne, and Lyons, *Books, readers, reading*, p. 9.

⁵² D Langmore, 'Wilson, John Purves (1852-1932)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120592b.htm?hilit=wilson>, accessed 11 November 2009.

⁵³ JP Wilson, 'Fiction in public libraries', in *Account of the proceedings of the Australasian Library Conference: together with the papers read, list of delegates, etc., and the constitution and office bearers of the Library Association of Australasia*, Melbourne, 1896, p. 53.

the British Museum library, through legal deposit, was 'bound to have a practically complete collection of English fiction, and need not inquire too curiously about the objections to novels', things were 'not quite the same' for the major Australian reference libraries because of the impossibility of resourcing universal acquisition.⁵⁴ MacCallum found that novels were 'an integral, characteristic, and most excellent part of our literature and, therefore, should be in the library', but in the Australian context, must not be allowed 'by their presence to interfere with more earnest requirements'.⁵⁵ In his paper, 'Abuse of fiction in lending libraries', William Fairland, the Secretary of the Sydney School of Arts, argued for the educative role of public libraries in 'convincing the masses that a wise selection of literature is of paramount importance', to break the habit of exclusive fiction consumption.⁵⁶

In the wider community, some critics found contemporary fiction threatening to the moral health of the new nation. In a criticism of the quality of books offered in 'free libraries' in Australia, a correspondent wrote to the Tasmanian *Mercury* newspaper in 1902 that 'the novel is not the best literary pabulum for a nation which needs strong and well-instructed men and women'.⁵⁷ The novel 'for daily food is as bad as mere pap would be for growing men', he considered, 'read as it is being read — and from the public libraries, too — the novel is playing havoc with the intellects of our young men and women'.⁵⁸ The editor of the Melbourne *Argus* wrote in 1913 that 'both supply and demand [of novels] are falling into the hands of women'.⁵⁹ As Hammond has identified in the British context, in the newly federated Australia popular fiction was perceived as a feminine and 'feminising' form of literature that had a debilitating effect upon young men, and the nation itself.⁶⁰

⁵⁴ MW MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', in *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898*, Sydney, 1898, p. 75.

⁵⁵ MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', p. 80.

⁵⁶ WM Fairland, 'Fiction in lending libraries', in *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898*, Sydney, 1898, p. 88.

⁵⁷ 'Free libraries. Some evils thereof', *Mercury* (Hobart), 22 October 1902, p. 3.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Editorial, *Argus*, 4 October 1913, p. 18.

⁶⁰ See Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore'.

This gendering of types of fictions remained as an undercurrent in literary criticism for some decades. A review of Australian fiction in the Melbourne *Argus* in 1938 suggested that the 'essential quality' of Australian fiction should be 'a strong and rugged realism', identified as a 'virile quality which may make a good basis for a national literature'.⁶¹ The gendering of fiction extended in some cases to the public library itself. In 1925 the Melbourne *Argus* observed that while fiction made up 'slightly over one third' of loans from the Melbourne Public Library lending collection, this was significantly less than the 95 per cent fiction loans found in the many circulating libraries in the city.⁶² This, the correspondent wrote, was 'because the ordinary lending library caters for women and girls, and they read nothing but fiction': 'the Public Lending Library is really a men's library, and the novels which are there are mostly those that have become literature. They are not the popular fiction of to-day, much of which is "cancerous", and most of which is ephemeral'.⁶³

As a result of these factors, the major Australian colonial reference libraries typically excluded all except 'high' fiction from their reference collections, maintaining active censorship of uncanonised literature. The Public Library of New South Wales established a policy excluding the fictions of living authors from its reference collections and in 1935, when the seminal Carnegie report on Australian libraries was published, the reference collection consisted 'almost wholly of non-fiction'.⁶⁴ Attitudes were similar at the Victoria Public Library in Western Australia. At the opening of the institution in 1889 trustees asserted that while 'poetry, the drama, and the more famous novelists are amply represented',

⁶¹ 'Australian fiction', *Argus*, 25 June 1938, Supplement p. 16. The white, male hegemony in Australian literature was internally contradictory, the masculine literature that was promoted by the 1890s literary nationalists being challenged by femininity and domesticity. Susan Martin has described this as an 'unequal dichotomy' in Australian literature, where women's writing was situated on the negative side 'which grouped Realism, the rural, egalitarianism, originality, action and male bonding against Romance, the home and the urban, conservatism, unoriginality, feeling and heterosexual love or female bonds': SK Martin, 'National dress or national trousers?', in B Bennett, J Strauss and C Wallace-Crabbe (eds.), *The Oxford literary history of Australia*, Melbourne, 1998, p. 93.

⁶² 'What the people read', *Argus*, 31 January 1925, p. 32.

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ R Munn and ER Pitt, *Australian libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, Melbourne, 1935, p. 39.

the ‘more ephemeral works of fiction’ were not to be found.⁶⁵ At the Melbourne Public Library, popular novelists of the time were initially excluded. Founder and trustee Redmond Barry reportedly said that ‘with few exceptions, no novels were admitted to the shelves of the Public Library’ and he was ‘happy to say that they were being stolen one by one’⁶⁶), although respected British novelists such as Dickens, Scott, Kingsley, Fielding and Richardson had their place on the shelves of the reference collection.⁶⁷ In a measure of the shift to greater acceptance of a wider spectrum of fiction in the last decades of the nineteenth century, trustee of the Melbourne library and university professor Edward Ellis Morris was reported in 1887 as saying that ‘it was no use railing at novels. All that could be done was to select the best.’⁶⁸

Those state libraries that established lending collections in the nineteenth century were forced to address popular literature more urgently than those that retained a purely reference function. Librarians shared a perception of a lower class of content — and indeed of the readers — in these lending collections. At the 1902 Library Association of Australasia conference HCL Anderson articulated the distinction between ‘casual’ library users who borrowed ‘mere fiction from the lending branch’ and the ‘genuine lover[s] of learning’ who studied the ‘literary treasures of bygone ages’.⁶⁹ In the lending collections the proportion of fiction was typically higher than in the reference collections, although even in the lending collections living authors were excluded. At the lending library at the Public Library in Sydney, where in 1895 ‘the chief demand’ was for fiction, the *Sydney Morning Herald* observed that ‘no author can be considered really happy till he is dead; for not till then is he permitted a niche’ on the shelves.⁷⁰ Trustees did not find themselves ‘justified in competing with private libraries’ in this matter and ‘wisely considering’ that the ‘20 per cent of fiction which is allowed to the whole

⁶⁵ ‘News and notes’, *West Australian* (Perth), 29 November 1889, p. 3.

⁶⁶ ‘Opening of the Brighton Free Library’, *Argus*, 9 May 1887, p. 7.

⁶⁷ D McVilly, ‘A history of the State Library of Victoria, 1853-1974’, MA Thesis, Monash University, 1975, p. 39.

⁶⁸ ‘Opening of the Brighton Free Library’, *Argus*, 9 May 1887, p. 7.

⁶⁹ HCL Anderson, ‘Public libraries and the government subsidy’, in *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902, p. 9.

⁷⁰ ‘The Free Public Library. How and what people read’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1895, p. 3.

collection can be most profitably made up from the standard authors'.⁷¹ The policy excluding living authors was relaxed in 1898,⁷² when a 'freer choice of recent fiction' including 'the works of some of the newly-arrived authors' was made available in the lending library (for the 'poorer class of readers').⁷³

Fiction was equally in demand in the lending collection of the Melbourne Public Library.⁷⁴ In contrast to the greater accommodation allowed fiction in Sydney in the same period, from 1902 policy directed the Melbourne library to curtail the amount of fiction in the lending collection, and its use.⁷⁵ In November 1903 chief librarian Armstrong was asked to write a report to trustees on the 'class of fiction provided in the lending library' in response to questions raised by an article in the Melbourne *Herald*,⁷⁶ and as a result in 1904 it was decided that all fiction less than ten years old would be excluded from the collections. Unsurprisingly, public use of the aging fiction collection declined. In 1905 the *Argus* approached Armstrong to explain this falling use of fiction by the public. Armstrong explained to the correspondent that:

...the trustees began by stocking the shelves with all the accepted classics of English — and some European — fiction... Soon their generosity grew wider; they provided works admittedly of high class, but not of the supreme class called classical "—and here", says Mr. Armstrong, "we probably admitted a few books of debatable literary character." Then they ceased replenishing the shelves, except by an occasional book or two.⁷⁷

In Armstrong's opinion, the object of the lending library was 'not to provide current fiction for the entertainment of borrowers' and no attempt was to be made

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² M Talbot, *A chance to read: a history of the Institutes movement in South Australia*, Adelaide, 1992, p. 50.

⁷³ Editorial, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 16 June 1899, p. 6.

⁷⁴ Wilson, 'Fiction in public libraries', p. 53. In 1895 novels made up 55.5 per cent of circulation, in 1909, 63.1 per cent. See 'What we read', *Argus*, 10 May 1909, p. 8.

⁷⁵ McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', p. 125.

⁷⁶ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee, Melbourne Public Library, 26 November 1903, in Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV), Melbourne.

⁷⁷ 'Public lending library. Demand for fiction', *Argus*, 30 December 1905, p. 14.

to 'keep pace with the publishers of novels'.⁷⁸ Armstrong observed that 'the trustees have no rigid method in the selection of books, no official censor to furnish them with lists. Works are placed in the lending library at the suggestion of the librarian, of his assistants, of the trustees themselves, or of members of the general public'.⁷⁹ As in Sydney, the Melbourne Public Library had no wish 'to come into competition with the circulating libraries established by booksellers, by municipalities, or by mechanics' institutes'.⁸⁰ With a policy of adding only novels that were of 'permanent value' to the reference and the lending libraries 'from time to time',⁸¹ the overall quantity of fiction in the collections was gradually reduced. In 1914 the reference library held 1,500 volumes of fiction (a reduction of 4,000 books in nine years): trustees considered this quantity 'satisfactory'.⁸² No further significant enquiries into fiction (in either the lending or reference collections) arose until the late 1920s, when the question of Australian fiction became central to the issue.

At the Tasmanian Public Library attitudes to fiction replicated the views and practices of the Australian library profession in general, although there is evidence of greater tolerance towards popular fiction and recent publications prior to the opening of the lending library in 1907. In 1890, in an extended comment piece in the *Mercury*, librarian AJ Taylor described his library's intention not only to supply the well-read with the 'best literature of the day', but also to serve the

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Ibid.

⁸⁰ Ibid. Similar sentiments were expressed in Tasmania, where it was suggested that the new Carnegie lending library would 'not enter into serious competition with any of the existing subscription libraries already in the city, which appeal to a very different class of readers': 'Mr Andrew Carnegie and the Tasmanian Public Library', *Tasmanian News*, 17 November 1902, p. 2. This confidence was perhaps unfounded. Martin Hewitt, discussing the shifting economy of the book in Britain, has suggested that '[w]ith respect to the circulation of print in the broadest sense ... it may be that the [public] libraries worsened the economics of the second-hand bookseller and newsagents': M Hewitt, 'Confronting the modern city: the Manchester Free Public Library, 1850–80', *Urban History*, vol. 27, no. 1, 2000, p. 84.

⁸¹ Minutes of meeting of the Books Committee 19 August 1913, Trustees of the Public Library, gallery and Museum, Minutes of the Books and Library Committees (rough copy), vol. 41, MSF12855, SLV.

⁸² Minutes of meeting of the Books Committee 10 March 1914, Trustees of the Public Library, gallery and Museum, Minutes of the Books and Library Committees (rough copy), vol. 41, MSF 12855, State Library of Victoria, Melbourne.

‘welfare and education of the masses’ with a supply of “general literature”, even although some of it may be of an ephemeral character’.⁸³ Taylor observed that:

While every care has been taken to avoid wasting money on literature that may be regarded as “trashy”, equal care has been taken to keep the tables well supplied with literature that includes the works of the best writers of fiction of the day and the lighter works of travel and adventure that are published from time to time.⁸⁴

As at the Melbourne Public Library, attitudes to fiction at the Tasmanian library shifted at the end of the century and policy became increasingly conservative and censorial up to the end of the First World War. In applying for increased government funding in 1900 in a deputation to the Chief Secretary and Treasurer of the Tasmanian Government, the trustees reported that, while some 23,000 volumes had been used in the library in the past year, including ‘a large number of historical and biographical books’, ‘no novels had been purchased for some time past’.⁸⁵

As discussed in Chapter 3, public donors of fiction were still plentiful. Some may have been encouraged by Carnegie’s philosophy, reported in the *Mercury* in 1900, that a ‘taste for reading drives out lower tastes’, and that ‘good fiction’ was ‘one of the most beneficial reliefs to the monotonous lives of the poor.’⁸⁶ Most of the 1300 volumes of fiction on the shelves when the new Carnegie library opened in 1907 were donated. Belated censorship of this donated fiction occurred in 1910, when Taylor discovered that ‘a few of these volumes were of an undesirable character’.⁸⁷ These novels were withdrawn from circulation and a motion passed unanimously by trustees to support the action of ‘readers who discovered

⁸³ ‘The Tasmanian Public Library. By the Librarian’, *Mercury*, 27 June 1890, p. 3.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*

⁸⁵ ‘The Tasmanian Library, increased grant required’, *Mercury*, 23 June 1900, p. 3.

⁸⁶ ‘News and Notes’, *Mercury*, 13 June 1900, p. 5.

⁸⁷ Minutes of meeting 31 May 1910, Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart. Taylor blamed the problem on the ‘bulk’ nature of the donations that made rigorous censoring difficult.

objectionable matter in this branch of the institution to immediately bring the same under the notice of the Librarian'.⁸⁸

Taylor and the trustees remained firm in their rejection of more popular literature for another two decades. Under the heading 'Bad books', the *Mercury* reported on the discussion of the inclusion of fiction in the library collections at the trustees meeting in May 1916.⁸⁹ Taylor noted that he himself 'had been in the habit of exercising a strict censorship over the classes of novel which came to hand. He had thrown out a very large pile of novels, mostly written by women, which were simply awful'.⁹⁰ In August 1916 Miller thought the trustees should 'discourage the buying of any novels except those by certain standardised authors', and only those that were at least 'five or ten years old, and it was possible to ascertain their true worth'.⁹¹ The philanthropy of William Walker in 1923/24, with its component of contemporary and popular Australian fiction, forced a shift in the censorial position toward popular forms of fiction.

National creative literature in the Australian public library

A specific position on Australian fiction as a subset of international fiction was generally unstated in the library profession in Australia until the 1920s. However, it is the case that individual voices closely associated with the public library in Australia were often very supportive of 'consecrated' local production. The chairman of trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, Dr James Willson Agnew, promoted Australian fiction in very positive terms to the Australasian Science Association in January 1890. In his speech as president of the 'Literature and Fine Arts' section of the association, Agnew dwelt optimistically upon 'the future of Australian literature', noting that a number of Australian authors had recently been able to undertake fiction of a 'more ambitious or permanent character'.⁹² Agnew praised the indigeneity of the best authors, including Jessie Couvreur

⁸⁸ Minutes of meeting 31 May 1910, Minutes of the Meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 24 March 1903 - 18 December 1914, AA827/1/4, TAHO, Hobart.

⁸⁹ 'Bad books', *Mercury*, 31 May 1916, p. 4.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ 'Public library trustees', *Mercury*, 30 August 1916, p. 8.

⁹² 'The Australasian Science Association', *Argus*, 13 January 1890, p. 4.

(‘Tasma’) who ‘treats largely of local scenes and subjects’ and was thus ‘truly indigenous’, Rolf Boldrewood (‘true local colouring’), and Mrs Humphry (Mary Augusta) Ward. Agnew also praised ‘several novels thoroughly Australian in scope and character’, including *Geoffrey Hamlyn*, and *The broad arrow*, and Australian poets such as Adam Lindsay Gordon and Henry Kendall.⁹³

A number of papers that aimed to raise the profile of Australian literature were presented at the early Library Association of Australasia conferences at the turn of the twentieth century, although (perhaps significantly) all were presented by attendees who were not professional librarians. In 1896 and 1898 Melbourne bookseller Adam G Melville presented papers on the book trade in Australia, describing literary production in the nation from the early nineteenth century to the present. In these he concluded that, although the ‘book trade in Australia could not exist for one week on sales of Australian literature only’, ‘existing public libraries and literary institutions’ had expanded since 1860, new ones had opened, and ‘all round the literary and intellectual life of the Australian people has been kept alive, and also quickened’.⁹⁴ Mungo MacCallum explicitly recommended the acquisition of an approved selection of Australian creative literature by the major Australian reference libraries, in his 1898 talk to the Library Association of Australasia, ‘The place of fiction in public libraries’. MacCallum envisaged the acquisition of all ‘masterpieces’ of Australian fiction into the ‘national collection’.⁹⁵ In order to maintain the quality of the national collection, Australian fiction must necessarily be ‘subjected to a very severe, and, in most cases, a

⁹³ James Backhouse Walker was not impressed with Agnew’s address, noting that while ‘the good old doctor’s optimism shines through every line’, ‘it was rather cruel to make him write an address on a subject on which he is so remarkably ignorant’, Agnew having in fact ‘only the most superficial acquaintance with Australian authors’: James Backhouse Walker to Mary Augusta Walker, 16 February 1890, W9/L2/5 (4), Special and Rare Materials Collection, University of Tasmania Library, Hobart.

⁹⁴ AG Melville, ‘The book trade in Australia’, in *Account of the proceedings of the Australasian Library Conference: together with the papers read, list of delegates, etc., and the constitution and office bearers of the Library Association of Australasia*, Melbourne, 1896, p. 46; and AG Melville, ‘The book trade in Australia since 1861’, *Library Association of Australasia proceedings of the Sydney meeting, October, 1898*, Sydney, 1898, pp. 107-15.

⁹⁵ MacCallum, ‘The place of fiction in libraries’, p. 81.

somewhat lengthy quarantine', or alternatively be put to the test of an 'uncompromising and draconic' advisory committee.⁹⁶

This determined stringency toward Australian fiction is highlighted by comparison with the policy adopted towards contemporaneous Australian poetry. At the Melbourne Public Library national poetry was more actively — and less critically — collected than national fiction. The library also deliberately adopted a less critical criterion for inclusion of Australian verse than that which was applied to English and American verse: Armstrong noted that while 'few of the living minor poets of English have as yet found a place on the lending library's shelves', trustees and librarians 'viewed Australian poets with a less doubtful eye and all notable Australian verse is already there'.⁹⁷ It is evident that, at this time, the Melbourne Public Library condoned patriotic collecting in the more orthodox genre of poetry, but did not yet privilege 'lesser' forms of creative literature such as fiction (either 'high' or popular). This privileging reflects the proliferation of poetry in everyday life in the period, from the quantities of verse published in newspapers, spoken in schools, theatres, and homes, as Peter Kirkpatrick has noted.⁹⁸ It also confirms, in Bourdieu's terms, the sustained elevation of poetry as the 'disinterested activity *par excellence*', and its historical prestige,⁹⁹ which allowed it to be consecrated as literature in a national discourse, when Australian fiction was still viewed with suspicion.

In the Melbourne Public Library little attention was given to the acquisition of Australian fiction. David McVilly notes that while the library did buy most of the Australian contemporary non-fiction published by local bookseller and publisher George Robertson, very little of the fiction offered by Robertson was purchased.¹⁰⁰ Neither was there a substantial quantity of Australian fiction at the public library in Sydney, despite its pioneering status as a collector and promoter

⁹⁶ MacCallum, 'The place of fiction in libraries', p. 80.

⁹⁷ 'Public lending library. Demand for Fiction', *Argus*, 30 December 1905, p. 14.

⁹⁸ See P Kirkpatrick, "'New words come tripping slowly": poetry, popular culture and modernity, 1890-1950', in Pierce, *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, esp. pp. 199-218.

⁹⁹ Bourdieu, 'The field of cultural production', p. 105.

¹⁰⁰ McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', pp. 48-49.

of non-fiction Australian material. As described in Chapter 3, the copyright legislation that stipulated conditions of legal deposit was typically ignored, at least until HCL Anderson joined the library staff in 1893, so local fiction was not even acquired consistently by this practice. Brian Fletcher writes of complaints received by the Sydney library in 1884 that readers were unable to find the works of ‘even popular Australian authors’.¹⁰¹ Principal librarian RC Walker responded by arguing that the authors (all poets) mentioned in the complaints (Thomas Henry Kendall, Charles Harpur, Adam Lindsay Gordon, and James Brunton Stephens) appeared in the ‘List of Works on Australia’ in the library, but he failed to mention any fiction authors.¹⁰² It is likely that given public complaints, the creative Australian literature was poorly represented and un-promoted. This situation changed little in the first decades of the twentieth century.

Even the Mechanics’ Institute libraries, with their high proportion of fiction, did little to popularise national literature. As Bremer and Lyons have noted, Australian titles were ‘swamped on the shelf’ by British and American authors.¹⁰³ Standing orders for British-published Australian authors were the usual extent of the representation in these libraries, including works within the canon by Henry Lawson, Boldrewood, Marcus Clarke and ‘Steele’ Rudd, but little else.

As I have described in Chapter 2, nationalism around Federation had a strong effect on Australian public library policy and aspirations, particularly in promoting awareness of the need to archive the new nation’s written heritage. Literary nationalism, however, appears to have had little effect on professional attitudes to stocking Australian fiction in public libraries from the 1890s up to the 1920s. It seems plausible that a strong perception in the international library profession of the novel working *against* national interests would make it far less likely that patriotic sentiments would weigh professional opinion in *favour* of the local fiction product. Without, as we have seen, a strong demand by readers for

¹⁰¹ BH Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, Kensington, NSW, 1993, p. 7.

¹⁰² ‘Free Public Library’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 9 April 1884, p. 7.

¹⁰³ Bremer and Lyons, ‘Mechanics’ Institute libraries’, pp. 223-24.

Australian work, the Australian public library did not actively embrace local fictions, nor apply any perceptions of exceptionality or special handling of this genre until the 1930s. Exceptions to this were the Mitchell Library, with its established role as a centre for Australian literature of all descriptions, and to a lesser extent, the Tasmanian Public Library, as described below.

Australian fiction at the Tasmanian Public Library

Some interest in Australian literature was present at the Tasmanian Public Library from the early decades of the twentieth century. One of the lectures offered by the library in its public lecture series in 1908 was on the subject 'Australian character and Australian books' in which the speaker, Australian journalist and author Milner MacMaster, expressed a positive view of the future of Australian literature, to which the public would turn for 'broad outlines of Australian character'.¹⁰⁴ A designated 'Australian Collection' in the lending library appears to have existed as early as 1918, though the fiction component was certainly small.¹⁰⁵ The 'List of standard authors of fiction whose works are represented in the lending library' made in 1916 included 132 names, but only four Australian authors: Louise Becke, Rolf Boldrewood and Guy Boothby and Ethel Turner.¹⁰⁶ Each of these authors was 'canonical', having established reputations and publishing careers in Britain. At this time 24.06 per cent of the lending library consisted of 'fiction' (popular literature), another 8.45 per cent of 'literature' (serious literature), and 5.91 per cent of 'poetry and drama'.¹⁰⁷ In the reference library 2.2 per cent was 'fiction', 15.98 per cent 'literature', and 5.26 per cent 'poetry and drama'. These figures remained stable through the early 1920s.

¹⁰⁴ 'Public library lecture', *Mercury*, 6 November 1908, p. 3.

¹⁰⁵ Accession register of books for the lending library, SLT16, TAHO, Hobart. The Tasmanian Public Library had a specific accession register for fiction, which is no longer extant.

¹⁰⁶ 'List of standard authors of fiction whose works are represented in the lending library', inserted in Minutes of meeting 25 July 1916, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁰⁷ 'Return indicating percentages of books in the reference and lending libraries and the combined libraries', inserted in Minutes of meeting 25 July 1916, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart. 'History' was some 14.84 per cent of the reference collection, and 7.14 per cent of the lending collection.

The acquisition of the body of Australian creative literature through William Walker's donations between 1924 and 1933 shifted the statistics significantly, creating a new emphasis on Australian material, both consecrated *and* popular. All of the fiction from Walker's donation — including both canonised Australian literature and popular fiction — was placed together with the non-fiction Australian works to form the new 'Australiana' collection in the reference library. Staff 'weeded' a large number of volumes, particularly from Walker's 1933 gift: those rejected included 'partly soiled books, etc, and duplicates', but also 'works of minor fiction'.¹⁰⁸ But many of the more ephemeral titles were retained. The acquisition of the ephemeral Australian fiction component, typified by the bookstall novels, into the reference collections of a state reference library had important implications. The Tasmanian Public Library became the first Australian library to hold a significant portion of this popular material. Popular and 'high' forms of Australian creative literature came together at the Tasmanian Public Library in this nascent — and deliberately created — archive of Australian literature.

Many more years passed before the collection was housed appropriately and made easily accessible through shelf and catalogue listings, but an important and constructive principle had been established. As noted above, Hammond has argued that a process of social legitimisation occurred in the British public library when contemporary fiction was acquired into conservative public library collections.¹⁰⁹ In the case of the accession of Walker's Australian fiction into the Tasmanian Public Library reference collection, the 'worthiness' conferred by the act embodied both the social conservatism identified by Hammond and a locally specific patriotism. This is the first instance I have identified in Australian public library history (leaving aside the exceptional case of the Mitchell Library) of a

¹⁰⁸ Mary Ann Walker to JDA Collier, 4 August 1933, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart. Caroline Walker, Walker's elder child, worked as an Almoner at the Hospital. Some of the volumes were packaged and sent to various Tasmanian lighthouses. This practice had a precedent. In 1917 over 200 volumes of recently de-accessioned fiction from the lending library that would not 'repay the rebinding' were given to the Inspector of Lighthouses, Mr Meech, for distribution. See Minutes of meeting 30 July 1917, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO.

¹⁰⁹ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', pp. 83-110.

national criterion for judgement of the value of the fiction overriding the historical baggage of negative opinion directed towards popular fiction emerging from the international public library profession.

EM Miller and the promotion of Australian fiction in the public library

As described in Chapter 4, Miller played a central role in the acquisition of the Walker collection. His promotion of Australiana at the Tasmanian Public Library was crucial to its ongoing enrichment in the following decades, and was linked with his work on the ambitious and extensive bibliography *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, published in 1940. Miller's interest in Australian literature had first emerged in the first decade of the century while he was employed at the Melbourne Public Library. Here he had formed a friendship with sub-librarian AW Brazier with whom he shared a 'common interest in philosophy and literature'.¹¹⁰ Brazier was vice-president of the Australian Literature Society in 1902, succeeding author Rolf Boldrewood in the position, and an active supporter of Australian author Marcus Clarke, who had been on the staff of the Melbourne Public Library in the 1870s.¹¹¹

Sourcing Australian novels for bibliographic and textual description was Miller's most difficult research task for *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*. Miller was obliged to hunt through the stock of second-hand booksellers to gain access to 'otherwise unprocurable fiction'.¹¹² Miller scoured all the major reference libraries and university libraries in Australia, and his search made him acutely aware of the inadequacy of public library collections of Australian fiction. He found the Walker Collection of fiction at the Tasmanian library one of the few adequate sources. He noted in the introduction to *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935* that 'the Walker (Australian) Collection' enabled him to

¹¹⁰ EM Miller, 'Some public library memories, 1900-1913', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 9, no. 35, 1985, p. 74.

¹¹¹ Brazier presented a paper to the Australian Literature Society in 1902 entitled 'Marcus Clarke: His work and genius' which Miller attended: Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 64.

¹¹² J Reynolds and M Giordano, *Countries of the mind: the biographical journey of Edmund Morris Miller (1881-1964)*, Hobart, 1985, p. 112.

‘prepare the groundwork of the text in poetry, drama and fiction’.¹¹³ Miller also acknowledged the Launceston Public Library, in northern Tasmania, which possessed ‘a large number of volumes of fiction which were not available elsewhere’,¹¹⁴ its ‘tattered ancient volumes [having] not been so lightly discarded in favour of newer ones’.¹¹⁵ Bibliographically, Miller found better resources: he utilised several catalogues of Australian material compiled by public librarians at the Melbourne and Sydney state libraries. Miller considered the *Catalogue of the Public Library of Victoria* (1880) as a ‘notable achievement’, the institution also having ‘an excellent separate card catalogue of publications relating to Australia’.¹¹⁶ He found the Mitchell Library catalogue ‘the most comprehensive of its kind’, although it did not differentiate non-Australian from Australian authors as it was ‘not prepared for any such purpose’.¹¹⁷

Miller’s work built upon the start made by Sir John Quick who, according to Miller, had initiated the idea through ‘his patriotism’, and through which he spent ‘his last years in making known the achievements of Australians in the world of letters’.¹¹⁸ Miller shared Quick’s patriotic sentiment, compiling the volume with the explicit intent of documenting Australia’s literary achievements and archiving its literary heritage for future national benefit. He noted that while ‘[m]any books by Australian authors are remembered’, other ‘worthy books, entitled to recognition, have, through bad luck or accident, been overlooked; they lie in forgotten nooks and shelves of libraries both public and private’.¹¹⁹ Miller indicated in the foreword to the bibliography that the volume was written deliberately to ‘appeal to Australian pride, patriotism and interest’. He sought in

¹¹³ EM Miller and J Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935: a descriptive and bibliographical survey of books by Australian authors in poetry, drama, fiction, criticism and anthology with subsidiary entries to 1938*, Melbourne, 1940, p. viii.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Reynolds and Giordano, *Countries of the mind*, p. 112. Launceston Public Library had begun as a Mechanics’ Institute library, and its unusually large component of fiction (for a public library) was probably a result of this. See S Petrow, *Going to the mechanics: a history of the Launceston Mechanics’ Institute 1842-1914*, Launceston, 1998.

¹¹⁶ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. 4.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

¹¹⁸ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. vii. Michael Roe describes Quick as a ‘classic Deakinite’ in his nationalism: M Roe, *Nine Australian progressives: vitalism in bourgeois social thought, 1890-1960*, St. Lucia, Qld, 1984, p. 300.

¹¹⁹ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. 1.

the volume to engage a broader Australian audience with their own literature and break down the negative perceptions of local culture.¹²⁰

Miller's work represented a significant enrichment of the literature on Australian writing, in its compilation of facts and bibliographic details, even though it was subsequently criticised for the very descriptive aspects by which Miller had sought to popularise the material.¹²¹ The Australian Literature Society rewarded Miller's commitment and patriotism by presenting him its gold medal in 1949.¹²² Miller's patriotic dedication in compiling such a definitive source was highly praised by writer, editor and publisher Percy Reginald 'Inky' Stephensen. Stephensen wrote that Miller had informed him that he had 'read more than two thousand Australian novels in preparing the bibliography' and that Miller found himself 'astonished by the high quality of many of them which are quite unknown and almost unprocurable'.¹²³ Miller was 'doing the kind of work which Australia needs most of all: research into our own lore'. From this type of work, Stephensen considered, 'the idea and the critique of Australian literature, as a thing-in-itself, will robustly emerge'.¹²⁴

Changing cultural nationalism in the 1920s and 1930s

The 'higher' forms of Australian literary culture had continued to struggle and fail to find wide readership in the first two to three decades of the twentieth century. Cultural nationalism in the widest sense suffered a loss of impetus after World War I, particularly through the promotion of closer defence ties with Britain. Economic development continued to operate through an overall imperial framework, and a conservative 'White Australia' policy maintained a focus on

¹²⁰ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. 2.

¹²¹ When it was decided to revise and republish the book in 1947 Frederick Macartney, who was to be the editor, considered the descriptive defects of Miller's book were 'so bad that they can hardly be exaggerated', an opinion shared by Vance Palmer and others: 'Report on Miller's Australian Literature', Frederick Macartney papers and correspondence, MS 10519, SLV. Michael Roe observes that Miller's judgement on Australian literature in these volumes 'sometimes rang fulsome, folksy, and parochial (he was ever ready to beat a drum for Tasmania and for his personal interests), but there were sense and insight too': Roe, *Nine Australian progressives*, p. 301.

¹²² Roe, *Nine Australian progressives*, p. 307.

¹²³ PR Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia: an essay towards national self respect*, Gordon, NSW, 1936, p. 136.

¹²⁴ Ibid.

British peoples as new citizens. Historian John Hirst argues that the abiding cultural theme of the 1920s to 1940s period in Australia was the often bitter and always passionate tussle between European and Australian culture: was Australia to be 'part of the old dead tree, Europe, or was it to be the young tree green?'¹²⁵ 'The Europeanists upheld the highest standards and doubted whether Australians could ever reach them', Hirst writes, while the nationalists 'wanted Australians to stop reading European literature and develop their own'.¹²⁶

The historiography of Australian literature identifies a new phase of intense literary nationalism, focused on the state capitals Sydney and Melbourne, emerging in the late 1920s and into the 1930s. The interwar period, Jennifer Strauss argues, was an 'important phase in the conceptualization of what it might mean to be an Australian writer', and there was 'considerable consolidation of the processes of literary production', although cultural nationalism was still a minority position held by a small group of intellectuals.¹²⁷ The new nationalism has been described by Patrick Buckridge as 'an actively utopian response to the crisis of national self-confidence' after the First World War and the Depression.¹²⁸ Robert Dixon argues that 1928 was a crucial year, in which Australia's first literary award, the Australian Literature Society's Gold Medal, was established, and the Sydney *Bulletin* established a prize for recent Australian fiction.¹²⁹ The 1930s also saw the publication of a small but growing body of literary criticism dealing with Australian fiction, with a number of pioneering works including HM Green's *Outline of Australian literature* (1930), and M Barnard Eldershaw's *Essays in Australian fiction* (1938), among others.¹³⁰ The year 1939 saw the Commonwealth Government providing funds towards the development of Australian literature, through the introduction of lectures on Australian literature at Australian universities. The University of Tasmania instituted its first lecture

¹²⁵ J Hirst, 'The whole game escaped him', in C Bridge (ed.), *Manning Clark: essays on his place in history*, Melbourne, 1994, p. 121.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ J Strauss, 'Literary culture 1914-1939', in Bennett, Strauss and Wallace-Crabbe, *The Oxford literary history of Australia*, p. 110.

¹²⁸ Buckridge, 'Nationality and Australian literature', p. 146.

¹²⁹ Dixon, 'Australian fiction and the world republic of letters', p. 240.

¹³⁰ Reynolds and Giordano, *Countries of the mind*, p. 114.

series in Australian literature in 1940, with Frederick Macartney and Nettie Palmer acting as visiting lecturers.

Throughout these years Australian fiction writers maintained a belief in ‘writing the real Australia’, in the project of ‘writing Australian identity’: as Strauss notes, ‘it was in the 1920s and 1930s fiction that the most fundamental attempts were made to identify the particular realities of Australian life, and to construct, as well as challenge, mythologies of reality’.¹³¹ Serious Australian fiction was increasingly seen as positively promoting identity, local and national. This notion had already been raised in the Federation period: a *Sydney Morning Herald* correspondent considered in 1899, for example, that in the ‘line of fiction which gains the ascendant’ can be found the ‘temperament of a nation’, and urged the ‘budding [Australian] novelist’ to ‘take a hint and try the strong, heroic text’.¹³² A more sophisticated version of this sentiment was articulated in 1935 by prominent radical nationalist writer Vance Palmer, in a column in the *Melbourne Age* that prompted many responses in the following weeks.¹³³ Palmer highlighted the ‘social function of literature’, emphasising its ‘role of helping people to adjust themselves to their surroundings or their surrounding to themselves’. Evoking the identificatory power of creative literature, he wrote that Australians ‘have to discover ourselves — our character, the character of the country, the particular kind of society that has developed here — and this can only be done through the searching exploration of literature’.¹³⁴ Palmer considered that the novel had been the ‘chief instrument’ for exploring society, and would ‘become increasingly important in the next fifty years’.¹³⁵

PR Stephensen articulated the intellectual cultural nationalist position in his widely read polemic *The foundations of culture in Australia: an essay towards national self respect*, published in 1936. Stephensen’s book is now seen as one of

¹³¹ Strauss, ‘Literary culture 1914-1939’, p. 121.

¹³² ‘The book world. Its changes and present tendencies’, *Sydney Morning Herald*, 11 August 1899, p. 9.

¹³³ Vance Palmer, ‘The future of Australian literature’, *Age*, 9 February 1935, p. 6.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

the most stimulating works of the 1930s,¹³⁶ ‘refreshing and inspiring’ for the ‘intellectual minority’ that were its target audience, as Craig Munro observes.¹³⁷ From a belief that ‘written history and literature provide a civilised nation with a national soul and a coherence’,¹³⁸ Stephensen articulated the necessary connectedness of all parts of the production of a national literary culture, from production and distribution, to consumption. He made explicit the correlation between generalised national patriotism and the specific necessity of supporting and promoting a rich national literature ‘to meet our own national need’.¹³⁹ He criticised those in Australia’s intelligentsia (writers, publishers, authors, and others) who failed to recognise this duty.¹⁴⁰

Stephensen did not mention public libraries throughout his thesis. However, he implicated the public library system in his conclusion that in ‘all sources of real or adult education ... Australian sentiment is crushed back into second place, or into no place at all’.¹⁴¹ Stephensen argued that ‘[b]ooks evoke readers; readers do not evoke books’: the ‘Australian public’ did not ‘“want” Australian literature; or anything else in particular. It takes what is offered to it, or what it can get; and hopes for the best.’¹⁴² He urged a proactive attitude to promoting public interest in Australian literature that had implications for the future role of Australian public libraries. The intellectual minority, including critics and writers such as Palmer and Stephensen, played a large role in the increasing engagement of the public library with Australian creative literature in this second period of literary nationalism, as the final part of this chapter demonstrates.

National fictions in Australian public libraries in the 1920s and 1930s

In the 1920s and into the 1930s, the Depression affected all public libraries, the

¹³⁶ C Munro, ‘Stephensen, Percy Reginald (1901-1965)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120084b.htm?hilite=stephensen>, accessed 9 January 2009.

¹³⁷ C Munro, *Inky Stephensen: wild man of letters*, St Lucia, Qld, Australia, 1992, pp. 158-59. Munro offers an insightful examination of Stephensen’s *The foundations of culture in Australia* in Ch. 10, ‘Mercurial Nationalism’.

¹³⁸ Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 98.

¹³⁹ Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 136.

¹⁴⁰ Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 125.

¹⁴¹ Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 104.

¹⁴² Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 110.

institutions typically experiencing reduced funding which affected the quality of services and the degradation of the book stock, a situation exacerbated by increased public use. In the 1940s in his survey of Australian libraries, Norman Lynravn found that 'as far as free libraries were concerned Australia was among the most backward of the civilized countries of the world'.¹⁴³ In this climate, the promotion of Australian literature as a national project was not a paramount issue in the minds of many librarians. Nonetheless, key individuals continued to promote national issues.

Bibliographically, the late 1930s and early 1940s saw greater attention to Australian publications and a move to national bibliographic control. As John Arnold has written, before the 1930s 'apart from a few helpful aids and the unpublished catalogues of the major libraries, there was virtually no national bibliographic record of the country's publishing output, either past or present'.¹⁴⁴ Miller observed that in the period immediately after Federation he and fellow librarians were 'little interested in Australiana bibliographically', citing the fact that in the 'Quarterly list of new books' published in the *Library Record of Australasia* between in 1901 and 1902 '[s]carcely any Australian writers were included'.¹⁴⁵ This situation changed in the 1930s. In 1937 the first *Annual catalogue of Australian publications* appeared, produced by the National Library, which included an author listing of 658 Australian titles published in the previous twelve months. This forerunner of the Australian National Bibliography was touted as not only providing, for the first time, a permanent record and material for any future survey of Australian literature, but also 'a valuable form of national publicity'.¹⁴⁶ In 1940 Miller's Australian bibliography was published, contributing further bibliographic tools in a period in which, in Miller's opinion, Australian literature had 'reached a stage when the demand for criticism has become impelling', criticism being unable to 'accomplish its purpose without the

¹⁴³ N Lynravn, *Libraries in Australia*, Melbourne, 1948, pp. 11-12.

¹⁴⁴ J Arnold, 'A commonwealth: recording Australia's heritage', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 41, no. 2, 1992, p. 123.

¹⁴⁵ Miller, 'Some public library memories', p. 64.

¹⁴⁶ 'Australian Books. Annual catalogue issued', *Canberra Times*, 22 April 1937, p. 6.

aid of bibliography'.¹⁴⁷ In 1941 the first volume of JA Ferguson's seminal multivolume *Bibliography of Australia* was published.

The late 1920s and 1930s also saw a revival of efforts to form a national professional library association. There had been no attempt at national conferencing since the demise of the first Library Association of Australasia soon after Federation. An informal national library conference was held in Adelaide in 1926, under the initiative of William Sowden, trustee of the Adelaide Public Library, and agreement was made to work towards a formal national association.¹⁴⁸ In 1928 a national professional body of Australian librarians was created as the 'Library Association of Australia'.¹⁴⁹ The organisation was to be short-lived like its predecessor, and had only two conferences, one at the University of Melbourne in 1928 and the next at the Melbourne Public Library in 1933.¹⁵⁰

Library historian Jean Whyte considers that the association was 'well founded', and its initial conference focused on 'serious professional concerns'.¹⁵¹ There was interest in international library developments, and the need for greater national co-

¹⁴⁷ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. 1.

¹⁴⁸ EM Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 III. Tasmanian Public Library', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 3, 1954, p. 18. Collier attended this informal meeting, representing the Tasmanian Public Library. Sowden travelled to Hobart in 1928 to meet with Miller to further the establishment of the professional association.

¹⁴⁹ By 1928 state professional library associations had been formed in Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania.

¹⁵⁰ JP Whyte, 'From ALA to LAA - the Australian Institute of Librarians', in P Biskup and MK Rochester (eds.), *Australian library history: papers from the Second Forum on Australian Library History, Canberra, 19-20 July 1985*, Canberra, 1985, p. 122. The next national body was the Library Association of Australia, formed in 1949. Whyte considers that disagreement over the inclusion of members other than professional librarians was central to the failure of the Australian Library Association. In Norman Lynravn's opinion the Association failed because of 'two irreconcilable schools of thought. One thought stood for subsidised subscription libraries with their management in the hands of untrained secretary-librarians. The other school believed in free libraries, and in the scientific training and appointment of professional librarians': Lynravn, *Libraries in Australia*, p. 20. See also J Metcalfe, 'Library development in Australia: a case study of development in a colonial and continental country', in LR McColvin and RF Vollans (eds.), *Libraries for the people: international studies in librarianship in honour of Lionel R. McColvin*, London, 1968, p. 138, for contemporary comments on the demise of the association.

¹⁵¹ Whyte, 'From ALA to LAA', p. 123. Boyd Rayward is more scathing, considering that the association was a 'nondescript body ... for whom the conference constituted almost the last gasp of life': WB Rayward, 'Introduction', in J Metcalfe and WB Rayward, *Developing a profession of librarianship in Australia: travel diaries and other papers of John Wallace Metcalfe*, Canberra, 1996, p. 13.

operation in Australia, including a national library system and the promotion of more free libraries across the nation. Miller, who was an active member of the association, saw that the lack of coordination of library services across Australia, and interstate rivalry reflecting pre-Federation colonial divisions, were a major reason for the lack of progress in Australian libraries in past decades. Miller placed himself among 'all who are interested in the unfolding of a statesmanlike library policy for the whole of Australia'.¹⁵² Intellectuals like Miller, who believed that Australia needed not only to privilege its own literature, but also to mould its libraries to suit the geographic and cultural specifics of the new nation, particularly resented the perpetuation of the British Museum model for the major Australian reference libraries.¹⁵³ Miller was keenly aware that the values of civic nationalism that had been successfully applied in areas such as the democratisation of primary school education (ensuring that almost all children had access to free primary schooling), had failed in the provision of a national library service. A major outcome of the 1933 meeting of the association was the resolution to invite the Carnegie Corporation of New York to finance a survey of all Australian libraries,¹⁵⁴ while John Metcalfe presented an 'excellent and controversial' assessment on the state of libraries across Australia.¹⁵⁵

The Australian Library Association and Australian literature

At the second conference of the association in 1933, the president of the Adelaide Public Library, S Talbot Smith, presented a paper entitled 'Libraries seen abroad'. In his paper Smith confessed to a general feeling of 'envy and almost bewilderment' after visiting libraries in Britain, leading to a 'firm desire to do what one could to keep the cause of culture going in our new land'.¹⁵⁶ The 'cause of culture', specifically national culture, was central to discussions at this second association conference. In his introductory comments, Sowden, in the chair,

¹⁵² EM Miller, 'The relation of state and municipal libraries', in *Proceedings of the Australian library conference: held at the University of Melbourne, August, 1928*, Melbourne, 1928, p. 34.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

¹⁵⁴ This survey is discussed in greater detail in Ch. 7.

¹⁵⁵ Whyte, 'From ALA to LAA', p. 126. The proceedings of this conference were not published, and exist in manuscript form at the State Library of Victoria.

¹⁵⁶ S Talbot Smith, 'Libraries seen abroad', in *Proceedings of the Australian library conference: held at the University of Melbourne, August, 1928*, Melbourne, 1928, p. 58.

observed that (amongst other goals) ‘an object of the Federal Association was to encourage more appreciative treatment of Australian authors, who now seemed to be [sic] far from an adequate recognition’.¹⁵⁷ The debate on the topic that ensued generated newspaper articles in the leading Melbourne newspapers (‘Australian authors criticized’, and ‘Australian authors defended’).¹⁵⁸ Despite his supportive statement regarding Australian authors, Sowden was generally unimpressed with the quality of Australian literature overall. He considered that the nation ‘had not developed a distinguished school of literature’, few authors having achieved mastery of ‘humour and pathos’ or ‘displayed imagination’.¹⁵⁹

Miller, unsurprisingly, defended the quality and importance of Australian literature, and what he saw as its proper place in Australian libraries. Deploring the lack of a ‘national repository of Australian literature’, Miller observed that ‘no library in Australia had the works of all Australian writers’.¹⁶⁰ He argued for ‘improved methods on the part of librarians and publishers if representative collections of works by native-born writers were to be acquired by libraries’, and commented on the lack of bibliographic tools, finding that the lack of publishers’ catalogues of Australian works was a major disability for librarians seeking to acquire representative collections of Australian literature.¹⁶¹ He considered that Percival Serle’s *A bibliography of Australasian poetry and verse* (1925) and the monthly *List of Australiana* produced by the Commonwealth parliamentary

¹⁵⁷ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association held at the Public Library, Melbourne, on 23rd and 24th November, 1933, p. 2.

¹⁵⁸ The report in the *Argus* was in the women’s pages of the paper, under a discussion of libraries for children. As Martyn Lyons has noted, much of the increasing popularity and influence of Australian writers emerged from children’s literature, and continued through the interest shown in particular by women. See Lyons, ‘Reading practices in Australia’, p. 353. This can be seen in the public library context, also, at an early date. At the Prahran Free Public Library, which in the 1920s was the only public library in the state of Victoria to maintain a children’s library, Australian authors were deliberately sought for the collections. The librarian AE McMicken ‘endeavoured to foster the works of Australian writers’, although he observed the ‘lack of suitable works by Australian authors of standing equal to that of Mrs Aeneas Gunn, Ethel Turner, and Mary Grant Bruce’: ‘Children’s libraries. Example at Prahran’, *Argus*, 30 December 1922, p. 9. This is an area that suggests further exploration.

¹⁵⁹ ‘Australian authors criticized’, *Age*, 23 November 1933, p. 10. Sowden had not changed his opinion on the quality of Australian literature, having written in 1912 that the ‘Australian type has not yet evolved, either in people, or language, or literature or art, or even in commerce’: W Sowden, *An Australian native’s standpoint: addresses*, London, 1912, p. 127.

¹⁶⁰ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association ... 1933, p. 6, (original emphasis).

¹⁶¹ ‘Australian authors defended’, *Age*, 24 November 1933, p. 12.

library were 'a step in the right direction', but that they 'did not cover the whole ground by any means'.¹⁶² While the student of Australian literature would be able to access the 'splendid system of guide books' to the Australiana collection of the Mitchell Library in Sydney, and in Melbourne could refer to the 'catalogue of books by Australian authors and books on Australia' that was kept separate from the rest of the catalogue, Miller urged further improvements.¹⁶³ Miller suggested 'a book collecting campaign by linking up the various State library associations, the Australian Literature Society, and the Australian Fellowship of Authors'.¹⁶⁴

Retracing earlier professional concerns about the definition of Australian literature,¹⁶⁵ discussion at the 1933 conference included the question of 'what system would a library go on to decide which books were Australian?' Miller acknowledged that 'there was always a difficulty in knowing which were Australian authors'. He suggested that Australians were 'in a transition period', with many authors born in Britain, although this was a 'difficulty that would solve itself in the course of time'.¹⁶⁶ Authors should be included if they 'had lived and were educated' in Australia. The stumbling block was that increasing number of Australian authors who left the country to find a living in the northern hemisphere, a phenomenon which in Miller's opinion 'would only increase in the next few decades'. Miller suggested that 'probably in time a distinction would be made between those who have remained in Australia and those who have gone abroad'.¹⁶⁷

The president of the Victorian branch of the library association, GM Wallace, while protesting that 'Australian literature was not a thing apart but was a tributary stream of the river of English literature', agreed that there was need for

¹⁶² 'Children's libraries', *Argus*, 24 November 1933, p. 5.

¹⁶³ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association ... 1933, p. 7.

¹⁶⁴ 'Children's libraries', *Argus*, 24 November 1933, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Such as H Wright, 'What is Australasian?', *Transactions and proceedings at the third general meeting held at Melbourne, April, 1902*, Melbourne, 1902 pp. 97-101.

¹⁶⁶ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association ... 1933, p. 7. Stephensen stated Miller's position more overtly in 1936 when he noted that 'from a national point of view our émigrés may be written off as a dead loss', having 'funked their job' of helping to create and sustain great national literature by leaving for the 'Old Country': Stephensen, *The foundations of culture in Australia*, p. 124.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association ... 1933, p. 7.

greater representation of Australian literature in public libraries.¹⁶⁸ Replaying the established negativity toward popular fiction in the public library, Wallace distinguished between the type of ‘cheap and ephemeral publications’ that public libraries should actively resist, and those works of ‘the real Australia’ in AB Paterson and Henry Lawson (authors central to the 1890s nationalist canon) that should be admitted to public collections.¹⁶⁹ Wallace argued that given the importance of Australian literature in assisting the development of national consciousness:

...in every library there should be an Australian section, distinctively labelled and set apart and easily discoverable. Australians should familiarize themselves with Australian works, not only because these had in them the “sweetness of home-made bread” but because they would inspire succeeding writers and help to build up a tradition of earnest and faithful literary effort.¹⁷⁰

This patriotic approach to Australian literature was not unanimous among the delegates. Metcalfe took a non-partisan position, wondering ‘how far it would be the duty of the library system to encourage the literature of any country. Would the Library Association of England or America consider it a part of their work to encourage the authors of these countries?’¹⁷¹ For most members of the Association, the provision of a wide range of useful ‘higher’ literature that reflected international (through still predominantly British) canons was their primary concern, far and above the privileging of the national literature. This position was aligned with British public library practice of the period: as GK Peatling has noted, ‘[British] libraries were international institutions, participating

¹⁶⁸ This attitude was typical for the period: for example, most Australian university professors were opposed to teaching Australian literature separately from the British canon. As Patrick Buckridge has written, in maintaining the superiority of old, mainly British authors, Australian academics often felt that ‘one of the main threats to their approach was the kind of literary nationalism that tended to over-praise inferior work, thereby lowering the standard or, more precisely, degrading the quality of the highest aesthetic pleasure available’: P Buckridge, ‘The age of appreciation: reading and teaching classic literature in Australia in the early twentieth century’, *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2006, p. 355. The major exception to this was George Mackaness who maintained a life-long devotion to Australian literature.

¹⁶⁹ ‘Australian authors defended’, *Age*, 24 November 1933, p. 12.

¹⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁷¹ Minutes of conference of the Australian Library Association ... 1933, p. 7.

in an international commonwealth of learning, neither realistically nor desirably restricted to the provision of or celebration of English/British literature'.¹⁷²

Nevertheless, the pro-nationalist opinions expressed at the meeting gradually came to have widespread acceptance in the following decades, and the role of the major Australian public references libraries as promotional vehicles and archives for regional and national literatures was fully naturalised. The Mitchell Library, unsurprisingly, was ahead of all other public libraries in acquiring and promoting Australian creative literature, although it is significant that it did not actively promote this role until the 1920s, stimulated at this time by the new literary nationalism. In 1927 Kathleen Monypenny, librarian at the Mitchell Library (and author herself of plays, poetry and criticism), wrote two articles for the *Sydney Morning Herald* on the 'scope and usefulness' of her institution. These emphasised the role the Mitchell played in collecting *all* Australian literature (a result of active enforcement of legal deposit requirements in the twentieth century).¹⁷³ Observing that the Mitchell was most commonly regarded as the 'Australian historical students' paradise' and 'a place where "records" are kept', Monypenny emphasised the fact that 'all Australian fiction, poetry, and verse finds a home within the kindly walls of the Mitchell Library' (although in her opinion, only the 'minority ... [was] worth reading').¹⁷⁴ Monypenny noted that:

The collection of purely Australian fiction is as complete as it has been possible to make it. That is to say, there are all the early stories David Scott Mitchell and the trustees after him have been able to obtain; stories of colonial days, of life in the Australian bush, of adventure in Van Diemen's Land, told in the grand manner. In addition, a copy of every volume of fiction published in Australia or New Zealand is acquired by the Library, as well as all books published abroad by Australians or about Australia.¹⁷⁵

¹⁷² GK Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain, 1850-1919', *Library History*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, p. 42.

¹⁷³ Kathleen Monypenny, 'Literature. The Australian output', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 17 September 1927, p. 13; and Kathleen Monypenny, 'Mitchell Library. Its scope and usefulness', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 November, 1927, p. 13. Monypenny had been at the Mitchell Library since May 1920, and remained there until 1936. See B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2007, pp. 81-82, 201-202.

¹⁷⁴ Monypenny, 'Mitchell Library. Its scope and usefulness'.

¹⁷⁵ Monypenny, 'Literature. The Australian output'.

Monypenny considered the Mitchell collection a 'fair index of Australian literature from its early days up to the present'.¹⁷⁶ Her promotion of the collection through the newspaper articles suggests an increased awareness of the potential value of the collection to the public, and also to the larger development of Australian literary culture. Monypenny suggested that a search through the 'excellent material lost in the backnumbers of forgotten magazines and journals, weeklies, and quarterlies' stored in the library would reward an enterprising Australian publisher with much literature suitable for republication, and 'thus could be laid the foundation of a more general body of Australian literature'.¹⁷⁷ Monypenny was at the vanguard of this type of thinking: in 1935 poet and critic Frederick Macartney argued that the advance of Australian literature could be promoted by the republication by the commonwealth of early 'classics' such as Tom Collins' *Such is Life* from the archival materials 'lying in our great libraries'.¹⁷⁸

Ida Leeson, Hugh Wright's successor as Mitchell Librarian from 1932 to 1946, further enhanced the Mitchell's collection relating to Australian creative literature (among many other areas), as Brian Fletcher has shown.¹⁷⁹ She fought particularly hard to have the library acquire the papers of publishers and booksellers Angus & Robertson in 1933, which included correspondence, manuscripts and unpublished books of leading Australian writers such as AB Paterson.

The final part of this chapter charts the beginning of this process of acceptance and promotion of Australian creative literature, up to the early 1940s, focusing on the Melbourne and Tasmanian public libraries.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Frederick Macartney, 'Letter to the editor', *Age*, 23 February 1935, p. 4. Macartney was a prominent member of the Australian Literature Society, amongst other literature societies, and promoted Australian literature with other members of the radical intelligentsia including Vance and Nettie Palmer. He edited Miller's *Australian Literature*, which was republished in 1956. See 'Macartney, Frederick Thomas Bennett (1887-1980)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A150188b.htm>, accessed 19 November 2009.

¹⁷⁹ Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, pp. 119-21.

External agencies promoting public library provision of national literature

Miller and Wallace's position on the promotion of Australian literature in public libraries received increasing support in the next decade. Central to this was the activity of the cultural-nationalist intellectual minority who attempted to shift the dominant Anglo-centric focus towards a 'modern nationalist alternative'.¹⁸⁰ They sought to encourage greater engagement by readers, as well as public institutions, with Australian literary production. One nucleus of this type of nationalist cultural promotion was the Australian Literature Society.¹⁸¹ The society was an amateur body of writers and literary enthusiasts (including librarians such as Amos W Brazier) that had as its object the study of Australian literature and the encouragement of Australian authors. Active in Melbourne since its formation in 1899, it was not until the 1920s that the society identified and targeted the lack of Australian creative literature on Australian library shelves. Blame was not laid on the librarians (at least in writing), but rather on the limited funding for book purchases and the lack of central directives to ensure that some portion of the budget was deployed on Australian authors. Their concern was particularly directed to the smaller municipal libraries, but they engaged with the principal librarians and the policies of the central libraries to promote their aims.

At the annual general meeting of the Society in 1926, member Vida Lenox moved a motion 'that the Municipal Councils be circulated requesting them to purchase Australian Books for the libraries and a list of books to be included'.¹⁸² The experience of members of the association was 'that in these libraries work by our own authors obtained very little representation'.¹⁸³ The issue was raised again in 1927 in a symposium dedicated to the topic 'How best to encourage Australian Literature',¹⁸⁴ where it was noted that 'in the libraries to obtain Australian books

¹⁸⁰ Lyons, 'The book trade and the Australian reader in 1945', p. 404.

¹⁸¹ For a summary of the Sydney-based literature societies and their role in promoting Australian creative literature, see L Heath, 'Case-study: Sydney literary societies of the 1920s', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, pp. 365-69.

¹⁸² Australian Literature Society Minute Book February 22 1923 – April 11 1927, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

¹⁸³ 'Australian authors neglected', *Argus*, 9 February 1926, p. 23.

¹⁸⁴ Minutes of meeting 14 March 1927, 'President's Night', Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 – December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

it was necessary to climb high ladders at the risk of one's life'.¹⁸⁵ In the same year the Australian Literature Society was invited to contribute to a library conference at the Prahran Town Hall to discuss 'the betterment of the libraries of Australia'.¹⁸⁶ Australian Literature Society Vice-president AE Chancellor was appointed as the society's representative on a provisional committee to 'outline the programme of the [Library] Association'.¹⁸⁷ As a result of the deliberations of this committee, the president of the Australian Literature Society, James Booth, moved a motion that a deputation from the society should wait upon the Chief Secretary of the Victorian (Labor) Government, George Michael Prendergast, 'to ask that a certain portion of the £4,000 which is annually allocated among the mechanics institutes of Victoria should be devoted to the building up of a library of Australian works'.¹⁸⁸ In this way, it was hoped, 'Australian authors would receive encouragement, and the Australian public would be inculcated with a love of its own literary productions'.¹⁸⁹

The deputation urged the state ministry to 'stipulate that a proportion of the grant to country libraries should be spent in Australian literature'.¹⁹⁰ Booth argued that 'at the present time there were a good many people who were not aware that an Australian literature existed'.¹⁹¹ He considered that while 'it might be contended that there were not enough Australian authors to justify the request', he would be able to 'present a list of 400, and more could be added to these', representing writing of merit in every department of literature, from poetry and fiction to drama, history and theology. 'For this reason a plea that there were not Australian books on which the [annual library grant] could be spent would not hold up'.¹⁹² Delegation member and educationist Charles Richard Long, who had been a

¹⁸⁵ 'How to encourage our literature', press clipping in Minutes of meeting 14 March 1927, Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 – December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

¹⁸⁶ Minutes of meeting 14 March 1927, 'President's night', Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 – December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

¹⁸⁷ Minutes of meeting 2 June 1927, Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 – December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

¹⁸⁸ 'Literature Society. Encouraging Australian authors', *Argus*, 12 April 1927, p. 15.

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹⁰ 'Australian literature. Neglect in libraries. State action requested', *Argus*, 16 June 1927, p.15.

¹⁹¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁹² *Ibid.*

founding member of both the Australian Literature Society and the Royal Historical Society of Victoria, appealed to Prendergast's personal sympathies, observing that 'it was regrettable that Australian literature had not the place in libraries that it deserved'.¹⁹³ He revealed that it had:

...been his hobby when touring the country on his duties to call at the libraries and discuss the matter with librarians, and he had found that Australian writers were everywhere neglected. The growing generations should have every opportunity of studying the books that would teach them the best in nature and life around them.¹⁹⁴

Prendergast, who had been a trustee of the Public Library, Museums and National Gallery in Melbourne since 1921, was sympathetic to the delegation.¹⁹⁵ He agreed that 'there should be a proportion of Australian poetry, fiction, and general literature kept' in all Australian public libraries, and promised to 'see that all libraries in receipt of the State fund would receive circulars asking that Australian books should be obtained where possible'.¹⁹⁶ Although unable to impose a per cent condition, due to the small quantities of funds available which must also include works of reference, Prendergast promised to 'do everything possible to encourage Australian literature' in Australian libraries.¹⁹⁷ In the course of time some of the country libraries did increase their Australian content: a 1944 survey found that in 'a great many' of the libraries surveyed in Australian country towns, 'there were almost no books by Australian writers', but in a few, the authors of the survey found 'Australian writers are very popular', in particular the adventure fiction of writers such as Ion Idriess.¹⁹⁸

Australian Authors' Week 1927 stirred further interest in stocking Australian literature in Australian public libraries. The literary event, organised by

¹⁹³ Ibid.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ G Serle, 'Prendergast, George Michael (1854 - 1937)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110290b.htm?hilit=prendergast>, accessed 10 August 2009.

¹⁹⁶ 'Australian literature. Neglect in libraries. State action requested'.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁹⁸ 'Country town and readers', *Argus*, 30 December 1944, Supplement p. 6. The survey was by Alan and Jean McIntyre, *Country towns of Victoria: a social survey*, Melbourne, 1944.

Melbourne bookseller Charles Harold Peters, ran from 12 to 19 September 1927. It included among its events a literary competition, the distribution of seventy-nine volumes of literature by Australian authors through Peters' radio talk show (3LO Melbourne), a dinner for Australian women writers at the Lyceum Club, and talks and addresses at various schools and institutions.¹⁹⁹ The *Argus* newspaper ran a plebiscite for readers to vote for their favourite Australian creative authors in the categories of fiction and poetry.²⁰⁰ This activity prompted bibliographer Sir John Quick, who was to become a patron of the Australian Literature Society in 1928, to make a 'preliminary list' of recommended Australian books and authors, which he sent out to public libraries and publishing houses in late 1927.²⁰¹ It also prompted the beginnings of his interest in producing the bibliography of Australian literature, a project completed by EM Miller after Quick died in 1932, as noted above.²⁰²

Australian authors themselves were also active in promoting greater awareness of the lack of Australian literature in Australian public libraries in this period. Prominent examples were Vance Palmer and his fellow writer and nationalist Nettie Palmer, both of whom had connections with the Australian Literature Society, and were dedicated to the promotion of Australian literature.²⁰³ Their 'strength was in combining knowledge of world literature and international standards with passionate devotion to fostering national writing', and they had a

¹⁹⁹ 'Author's week. Distribution of books', *Argus*, 15 September 1927, p. 17.

²⁰⁰ Lyons, 'Reading practices in Australia', p. 350. Favourite fiction authors included, from the most popular, Marcus Clarke, Rolf Boldrewood, Aeneas Gunn, Henry Lawson, Roy Bridges, Ethel Turner, Bernard Cronin, Mary Grant Bruce, Dale Collins and 'Steele' Rudd. See also Martyn Lyons' description of commemorations of Australian authors between the world wars: M Lyons, 'Literary anniversaries: commemorating Shakespeare and others, 1900-1940', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, pp. 398-400.

²⁰¹ Minutes of the meeting 14 November 1927, Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 – December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

²⁰² Roe, *Nine Australian progressives*, p. 300.

²⁰³ Nettie Palmer made the largest contribution, writing a personal column, 'A Reader's Notebook', for *All about books*, the semi-popular literary journal produced by the Society from December 1928 to March 1938. See D Jordan, *Nettie Palmer: search for an aesthetic*, Melbourne, 1999, p. 207; and G Serle, 'Palmer, Edward Vivian (Vance) (1885 - 1959)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110132b.htm?hilit=palmer>, accessed 10 September 2009.

fundamental belief in the social function of literature.²⁰⁴ The Palmers actively addressed the lack of attention given to Australian literature in the public libraries, including the major reference libraries. In November 1929, Vance Palmer wrote an article for the *Argus* highlighting the difficulty of finding Australian books on the shelves of bookshops or libraries. Palmer began by describing the lack of historical Australian material in most Australian libraries — with the marked exception of the Mitchell Library in Sydney — and suggested that the poverty of Australian collections raised the question of whether Australians had ‘anything to show that we are a literate people, interested in our own history, our topography, or the imaginative tendering of our own lives?’ ‘Such books of value as we have produced’, Palmer wrote, ‘are usually hidden away, like the family photograph album, of which we are secretly ashamed’.²⁰⁵

Palmer found that in the reference collection of the Melbourne Public Library the ‘stock of Australian books’ was ‘fairly adequate’, but ‘burrowing for them’ was difficult. In the fiction section of the lending library ‘there is a shelf labelled as containing the works of Edna Lyall; but there is no evidence that Henry Lawson ever lived and wrote’, nor any works by Rolf Boldrewood. Palmer identified a failure to approach Australian books with an archival attitude in the public library system, a problem exacerbated by the fact that ‘the trouble with our books is that they go out of print quickly and are soon unprocurable’. Palmer also criticised the ‘lack of any guide to Australian work’ as ‘astonishing and regrettable’. Palmer suggested that part of the reading-room ‘be devoted exclusively to a representative collection’ of Australian literature, and urged the production of a printed catalogue of the Australian books for the lending library, to ‘give clear and intelligible guidance to both visitor and student’. Palmer concluded that, while the ‘buying and arrangement of books in an Australian library must always be a difficult matter’, Australian literature ‘should have at least as much prominence in our libraries as Australian pictures in our galleries’.²⁰⁶

²⁰⁴ Serle, ‘Palmer, Edward Vivian (Vance) (1885 - 1959)’.

²⁰⁵ V Palmer, ‘Our secret books: the visitor’s dilemma’, *Argus*, 23 November 1929, p. 6.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Ibid. The Australian art collections of the National Gallery of Victoria had been significantly enriched during the directorship of the second director Bernard Hall (1891-1935), and it took pride

Nettie Palmer was also vocal in her criticism of the conditions of Australian literature in this period, highlighting the absence of adequate local publishing and poor publishing conditions, the poverty of literary reviewing, and general indifference to Australian creative literature.²⁰⁷ In the opinion of biographer Deborah Jordan, Nettie Palmer was the ‘most important non-academic critic working in Australia from the mid-1920s to the mid-1930s’, as she ‘challenged the theoretical assumptions and critical perspectives of the British establishment’ and the ‘cultural cringe’.²⁰⁸ Palmer published one of the earliest surveys of Australian literature *Modern Australian literature 1900-1923* (Melbourne, 1924). In these contexts, Palmer promoted the role of Australian libraries as an archive of Australian literature. She urged members of the public to ‘use their influence to have the books purchased for libraries to which they belonged’ to ensure that Australian literature, and Australian poetry in particular (which was typically published in small editions), would not ‘disappear altogether’.²⁰⁹

In 1935 the *Melbourne Age* published a series of major pieces by key commentators addressing the progress and future of Australian literature.²¹⁰ Vance Palmer began the series with the piece entitled ‘The Future of Australian literature’, mentioned above, in which he described the new confidence evident in Australian creative writing in the decade since 1925, linked to the recent flourishing of Australian publishing.²¹¹ The article inspired three more major pieces, all entitled ‘The Future of Australian literature’, by Professor of English at Melbourne University GH Cowling (16 February 1935), bibliophile, nationalist and president of the Fellowship of Australian Writers²¹² George Mackaness (23 February 1935), and prominent author Miles Franklin (2 March 1935), as well as

in its local acquisitions. See Ann Galbally, *The collections of the National Gallery of Victoria*, Melbourne (1987) for a full description.

²⁰⁶ Palmer, ‘Our secret books: the visitor’s dilemma’.

²⁰⁷ V Smith, *Vance and Nettie Palmer*, New York, 1975, p. 31.

²⁰⁸ Jordan, *Nettie Palmer*, pp. 208, 212.

²⁰⁹ ‘Australian poets’, *Argus*, 25 June 1930, p. 11.

²¹⁰ This series of articles had a ‘profound’ effect on Stephensen, who began writing *The foundations of Australian literature* within a few months. See Munro, *Inky Stephensen*, pp. 151-52.

²¹¹ V Palmer, ‘The future of Australian literature’, *Age*, 9 February 1935, p. 6.

²¹² The fellowship was founded in Sydney in 1928 to promote the interests of Australian writers, and soon became a nation-wide organization.

numerous letters to the editor. These pieces were uniformly enthusiastic about the growth of Australian creative literature and its future promise, differing only on the finer points of how to best promote the local product while maintaining its quality.

In a perceptive understanding of the larger institutional structures that constituted Australian literature, Mackaness' piece considered that '[i]t would now be both interesting and provocative, if we were to endeavour to discover what factors, apart from the writers themselves, have operated or are operating to promote or retard the growth and influence of Australian literature'.²¹³ On the 'positive side' of Australian literary development, Mackaness lauded the growth of the Australian publishing industry, the 'growing public interest in Australian books', the increase in the number and influence of literary societies, and growing federal support through the National Library. On the 'negative side', Mackaness implicated schools and universities for failing to teach Australian literature, and scholars for failing to give it critical attention. He also noted that '[o]ur libraries must come in for a share of the censure', highlighting the poor representation of Australian literature in country libraries in particular, a situation which had not improved greatly in the eight years since the deputation was made by the Australian Literature Society to George Prendergast.

Mackaness was particularly critical of the Tasmanian Public Library, not for the lack of Australian fiction, but for the inaccessibility of the collection for the public and the scholar. He observed that:

...just twelve months ago I found the priceless Walker Collection of Australiana hidden away, partly in the librarian's private office, and partly in a great unsorted heap in the basement ... uncatalogued and unavailable to the public. When I asked an attendant to show me the

²¹³ G Mackaness, 'The future of Australian literature', *Age*, 23 February 1935, p. 4. Mackaness had become interested in Australian history and literature in the 1920s, undertaking research in England on Australian history, and becoming a leading Australiana collector, and regular reader at the Mitchell Library. See Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales*, p. 164. Patrick Buckridge has great admiration for Mackaness who, unlike most other humanities professors in Australia in the period, maintained a balanced appreciation of both British and Australian literature. See Buckridge, 'The age of appreciation: reading and teaching classic literature in Australia in the early twentieth century', p. 355.

Australian books in open access he pointed to some three dozen frowsy volumes.²¹⁴

Mackanness also criticised the lack of access to the Petherick Collection in Canberra, inaccessible until the new national library was completed. In Mackanness' assessment, Australian libraries had an obligation, newly conceived, not only to collect Australian fictions, but also to promote them effectively to the reader.

JDA Collier, librarian at the Tasmanian Public Library, responded to Mackanness' criticism of his institution in the *Age* two weeks later, in a summary worth quoting at length. He wrote that:

It has been the policy of the trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library with the aid of the Walker endowment to bring as far as possible its collection of poetry and fiction by Australian authors up to date. There is no public library in Australia which has anything like an adequate collection of novels by Australian authors, due principally to the old practice of excluding fiction from the reference sections... A feature of the Tasmanian collection is the large number of complete, or almost complete, sets of works by leading Australian authors. It may surprise those who are interested in these things to know that the big mainland libraries do not, in many instances, contain anything like complete sets of works of outstanding Australian novelists who live in their own State. This fact alone would indicate the impossibility of critics of Australian literature effectively carrying out their task.²¹⁵

Collier discussed Miller's research for his Australian bibliography, and noted that '[o]ur experience in assembling our own collection has convinced us that no critic of Australian literature can competently do his or her work without utilizing the collections of libraries ranging over at least three or four States, of which Tasmania is one'.²¹⁶ Collier also urged increased inter-library loans 'in order to cover the whole field' of Australian creative fiction and suggested 'some form of union catalogue' so that Australian libraries could 'pool their collections of books

²¹⁴ Mackanness, 'The future of Australian literature', *Age*, 23 February 1935, p. 4.

²¹⁵ JDA Collier, 'The future of Australian literature', *Age*, 9 March 1935, p. 7.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*

by Australian authors' to gain universal representation.²¹⁷ He considered that this was particularly pressing 'in the case of fiction which is, or has been, published mainly in England'.²¹⁸

Engagement with national fictions in public libraries from the 1930s

Criticism from public intellectuals and the activities of bodies such as the Australian Literature Society had an influence on the major public libraries in directing attention to improving their collections of Australian literature. This increased engagement occurred even as circulating libraries continued to be extremely popular. As John Arnold has noted, there were some 500 circulating libraries in Melbourne in 1940, each with an average of 480 loans per week, the vast majority of which consisted of fiction.²¹⁹ Circulating libraries did not begin to decline until the 1950s.²²⁰ The major public libraries were not attempting to fill any gap in the market in increasing their Australian literature content: rather, their intentions were patriotic and nationalistic. This was particularly so at the Melbourne Public Library, where there is substantial evidence of active engagement with Australian writing and Australian authors, related to Melbourne's position as a centre of literary activity in the period. In 1927 the Melbourne Public Library considered taking part in Authors Week, although decided against it, possibly due to associated costs.²²¹ Sir John Quick wrote asking 'for the representation of the Library in the person of the Chief Librarian or a member of the staff as Associate Editor of a "Book of Australian authors"' (the beginnings of Australian bibliography completed by Miller). The books

²¹⁷ Inter-library loans had been raised as an issue at the subsidiary conference (for university librarians) of the Australian Library Association in Melbourne in 1928. At this forum it was resolved to put the practice into effect. In February 1929 the Tasmanian Public Library trustees agreed to participate in the scheme, with the encouragement of Miller. See Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 III', p. 18. Collier criticised the Mitchell for its policy of not participating in loans of any of its collections to other libraries.

²¹⁸ Collier, 'The future of Australian literature'.

²¹⁹ J Arnold, 'The circulating library phenomenon', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 197.

²²⁰ Arnold, 'The circulating library phenomenon', p. 198.

²²¹ See Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 25 August 1927, Trustees of the Public Library, gallery and Museum, Minutes of the Library and Books Committee (good copy), vol. 48, MSF 12855, SLV.

committee of the library responded that chief librarian RD Boys and staff, 'while not actively associated with scheme, will be glad to assist'.²²²

With its higher proportion of fiction, nationalist activity related to Australian creative literature at the Melbourne Public Library focused on the lending library. In December 1930 a special committee was appointed to 'consider if and how the Lending Library can be advanced'. One of the two options discussed to this end was a 'separate section for Australian publications', the other the development of a children's library. The committee recommended to trustees the establishment of an Australian section in the lending library 'to include history and criticism of Australian literature, and novels poetry and essays by Australian writers'. Only one member of the committee, imperialist Dr Alexander Leeper, dissented from the recommendation.²²³ The Australian section came into being at a peak of public usage, the lending library having received ever increasing patronage in this period with 'massive numbers of readers' largely due to the effects of the Depression.²²⁴

In 1931 Ernest Pitt succeeded RD Boys as chief librarian. Having had experience of managing the lending library prior to his promotion, Pitt was alert to the increasing interest in Australian literature in the community and the increasing demand for access to this reading matter. In 1934 he suggested to trustees that a 'special list of Australasian works in the Lending Library' be published to increase the accessibility of the collection.²²⁵ The *Classified catalogue of Australiana in the Public Lending Library of Victoria* appeared two years later, compiled by manager of the lending library, T Fleming Cooke. In the preface Cooke noted that of the 70,000 plus volumes in the lending library, approximately 10 per cent came 'under the broad heading of "Australiana", or books of

²²² Minutes of Books Committee 14 June 1928, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 43, MSF 12855, SLV.

²²³ Leeper's minority position can be ascribed to his attitudes in which 'Australian nationalism, even in forms as trivial as the kangaroo stamp, repelled him': JR Poynter, 'Leeper, Alexander (1848-1934)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A100052b.htm?hlite=leeper>, accessed 7 December 2009.

²²⁴ McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria', p. 139.

²²⁵ Minutes of Books Committee meetings 12 February 1934 and 12 March 1934, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 43, MSF 12855, SLV.

Australian interest', a portion of which was fiction.²²⁶ In 1935 Pitt responded to the series of articles on Australian literature in the *Age* with the comment that:

...to no one, perhaps ... is the increasing output of Australian books mentioned by Mr Vance Palmer more apparent than to the librarian of the Public Library, whose duty it is to collect, in accordance with the policy of trustees, all works by Australian authors and all works having a subject matter of Australian interest.²²⁷

'To the harassed librarian seeking some finality to their work', he concluded, 'the constant stream of recent Australian literature ... is a cause of some embarrassment'.²²⁸

Through its trustees and librarians such as Pitt and Fleming, the Melbourne Public Library maintained a good relationship with the Australian Literature Society and other bodies that directly promoted the concerns of Australian authors. The Australian Literature Society proposed and passed a motion at their January 1931 meeting that Robert Samuel Ross,²²⁹ trustee of the Melbourne Public Library since 1928, 'be written to, thanking him for his interest shown in Australian literature by advocating "A special Australian section" at the Public Library, which innovation is now in force there'.²³⁰ T Fleming Cooke substantiated the collegial relationship by giving a paper to the Australian Literature Society in 1933 on the 'valuable role played by Public Libraries in general culture'.²³¹ In 1934, trustees expressed a 'desire to hold an exhibition of books by Australian

²²⁶ TF Cooke, Preface, *Classified catalogue of Australiana in the Public Lending Library of Victoria*, Melbourne, 1936.

²²⁷ 'Chief Librarian's views. Insistence on high standard', *Age*, 9 February 1935, p. 6. Pitt had joined the Melbourne Public Library in 1900, succeeding RD Boys as Chief Librarian in 1931. Pitt was to achieve great prominence in the Australian library world as a co-author of the report on Australian libraries sponsored by the Carnegie Corporation. See Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*.

²²⁸ 'Chief Librarian's views. Insistence on high standard'.

²²⁹ RS Ross was a socialist journalist and trade-union organiser, a one-time librarian at the Broken Hill municipal library in 1906-08, and an 'omnivorous reader of socialist and rationalist literature'. He was not overtly nationalist, but through his passion for socialism in Australia he considered the promotion of Australian literature to be important to effective citizenship. See J Damousi, 'Ross, Robert Samuel (1873 - 1931)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A110465b.htm?hlite=ross>, accessed 12 November 2009.

²³⁰ Minutes of meeting 8 January 1931, Australian Literature Society Minute Book March 1927 - December 1931, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

²³¹ Minutes of meetings 20 March 1933, Australian Literature Society Minute Book February 1932 - December 1939, Box 2904, MS 12270, SLV.

authors' and, although the books committee declined the suggestion,²³² it was agreed to loan books to the Australian Literature Society for 'an Exhibition of books by Australian authors during middle of November'.²³³ For the 1939 'Australian Book Week', which featured nation-wide events designed to foster support and appreciation of the work of Australian writers, the Melbourne Public Library offered for exhibition a 'comprehensive selection of books by Australian writers'.²³⁴ This new engagement with Australian contemporary creative writing meant that by 1940, when his bibliography of Australian literature was published, Miller was able to report that 'in recent years [the Melbourne Public Library's] Australian collections have been considerably extended'.²³⁵

Pride in the local literature collections was also evident at the Tasmanian Public Library, although in Hobart there was less community literary activity in the form of societies and events than in Melbourne. Library staff promoted the collection through the press, drawing attention to 'Tasmania's own literature in Tasmania's own Library', which 'all Tasmanians should read'.²³⁶ The annual report for 1934, written jointly by Collier and Miller, highlighted the importance of the Walker donations to the Tasmanian Public Library in terms of the formation of the 'nucleus' of a collection of 'Australiana' for the library. Collier and Miller observed that the Walker Australiana had been 'most favourably commented upon by students and historians both at home and from the Mainland', and found in particular that the collection of works of Australian fiction, poetry and drama, covering the developmental period of Australian literature ... [was] now very comprehensive'.²³⁷ When a discrete room for the Australiana reference collection was opened in 1935, Collier was keen to draw attention to the fiction collection,

²³² Minutes of Books Committee meeting 13 August 1934, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

²³³ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 8 October 1934, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

²³⁴ 'Australian writers. Book week plans', *Argus*, 26 April 1939, p. 15.

²³⁵ Miller and Quick, *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935*, p. 4.

²³⁶ See JDA Collier, 'In our library', *Voice of Labor*, 20 October 1928; and JDA Collier, 'Tasmania in the Tasmanian Public Library', *Voice of Labor*, 19 October 1929. *Voice of Labor* was a weekly paper endorsed by the Trades Hall Councils of Hobart and Launceston.

²³⁷ JDA Collier and E Morris Miller, Annual Report, June 1934, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929 - 29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

noting that '[i]n recent years only had the prejudice against Australian literature been broken down'.²³⁸

William Walker's gift came at a time of increased public use of the library service. In the years from 1922 to 1924, circulation of books from the lending library increased by 130 per cent, and there had been in general 'a marked improvement in the use made of the library by the public', with an expansion in the nucleus of the children's section, reference, and the granting of 'additional privileges' to borrowers.²³⁹ However, funds were low, and it is significant that under Miller's direction the library made a priority of the Australian collection at this time. The newly formed Australiana Collection, comprising Walker's 1923/24 and 1933 donations, was the only part of the stock that was enriched to any degree in the following years. Miller was convinced of the value of the collection to the Tasmanian Public Library, writing candidly to fellow bibliophile JK Moir that the Walker Australiana 'gave the local library some prestige', as it was 'in the mass superior to that in libraries outside Sydney and Melbourne'.²⁴⁰ Miller actively promoted a perception to trustees that the Australiana was the only collection that was 'comparable to those of the leading Australian libraries' to justify expenditure.²⁴¹

The Australiana collection, including the fiction component, was enhanced in the following years through targeted purchases by Miller and librarian JDA Collier, and further gifts from other donors. Miller, who was a frequent traveller to the mainland, purchased 'several hundred volumes' for the library from second-hand bookshops and sales of private collections in Melbourne, including 'items of Australian history, biography, literature, etc, necessary to fill some of the gaps in

²³⁸ 'Andrew Carnegie benefactions remembered', *Mercury*, 24 December 1935, p. 3.

²³⁹ JDA Collier, 'Report on re-organisation 16/12/1924', in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

²⁴⁰ EM Miller to JK Moir, 27 September 1948, JK Moir collection (box 11, no MS number), SLV.

²⁴¹ Minutes of meeting 30 April 1934, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

the library's collection of early Australian and Tasmanian works'.²⁴² The national focus was matched by a local one, as Miller sought 'particularly ... books and pamphlets relating to Tasmania'.²⁴³ Miller's purchases included fiction by Louisa Anne Meredith, Jessie Couveur, Garnet Walch, James Hebblethwaite and Hubert Church. In the process of researching and compiling *Australian literature from its beginnings to 1935* (1940), discussed above, Miller privately purchased a 'vast number of books (including hundreds of novels)' many of which he sold on to the Tasmanian Public Library. Miller observed to JK Moir that these were added to the Walker Collection and 'filled up its literary gaps and made it a more balanced representation of Australian books'.²⁴⁴

Stimulated by the acquisition of the Walker donations, the first written policy on the future direction of the Tasmaniana and Australiana collections, including Australian fiction, was formulated at this time. The policy evolved partly through the stimulus of criticism by Walker's widow, who was concerned at the sale of duplicates from the Walker Australiana collection. Collier advised the trustees that it was necessary to 'adopt a definite policy in regard to the purchase of additions to their Australian collection'.²⁴⁵ The policy is worth quoting at length, as it clearly expresses the change in attitude in the major reference libraries to Australian literature, including popular fiction, in a few short decades, as well as a nationalistic reverence for the progressive model of Australian literature. Collier wrote:

My recommendation is that, in accordance with general library practice, the Trustees should build up the strongest possible local collection by securing whenever possible everything written about Tasmania, and all works, of whatever nature, of Tasmanian authors.

²⁴² Minutes of meeting 2 October 1933, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

²⁴³ Ibid.

²⁴⁴ EM Miller to JK Moir, 27 September 1948. Miller wrote to Moir that '[o]ccasionally the thought comes to me that I should have held on to the large amount of material I had secured in the thirties before the present craze of collecting trifles of Australiana set in. In those days I was more devoted to helping libraries than helping myself. My collections were handed over to these institutions. I would see bargains, purchase the items and fill the gaps in our local public collections'. Miller noted that their acquisition by the library 'gave the collection a well-balanced class distribution.'

²⁴⁵ JDA Collier to E Morris Miller, 27 August 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

In so far as works of a wider Australian character are concerned, I recommend that only the best works in each field be secured. This would include, naturally, fiction, but generally speaking, only when it is possible to buy it second hand or at reduced prices ... the policy regarding fiction might be extended to the purchase ... of the works of the earlier Australian novelists who are in a literary sense trail blazers, and whose work is of importance as showing the development of Australian literature...

In this way we shall gradually build up a strong local collection containing also all important works by Australian authors, and the novels, plays, poems, etc of what may be called the development period of Australian literature. More we can hardly achieve because we cannot hope, with our limited resources, to keep pace with the output of Australian authorship today.²⁴⁶

Conclusion

This chapter has charted the changing attitudes to Australian creative literature in the Australian public library from the late nineteenth century to the beginning of the Second World War. The chapter has argued that the international concerns relating to contemporary fiction in the library profession precluded the possibility of the Australian public library taking a more active role in preserving and promoting national fictions (canonical or uncanonical) in the late nineteenth century and early twentieth century. This is in contrast to deliberate engagement of the Australian library profession in this period with the preservation and promotion of other facets of Australian literary production, particularly historical and archival material. The peculiarities of Australian attitudes to Australian creative literature, due to persistent Anglophilism and ‘cultural cringe’ operating concurrently with peaks of literary nationalism, further complicated the already problematic relationship between fiction and the public library in this country in the early part of the twentieth century.

As this chapter has shown, major Australian public libraries and librarians did increasingly engage with Australian literature, a shift that was apparent from the late 1920s onwards, coinciding with the second period of intense literary nationalism. As one of Carter and Whitlock’s ‘network of social institutions and

²⁴⁶ Ibid.

practices' from which Australian creative literature emerged, the public library both drove the promotion of Australian literature through certain professional advocates such as E Morris Miller and philanthropists such as William Walker, and acted responsively to pressure exerted by nationalist writers and critics, in developing policies and collections of Australian literature. Engagement by librarians and their institutions can be seen in the creation of bibliographic tools and library catalogues to increase intellectual access to national fictions, the creation of discrete physical spaces for Australian literature to increase physical access, and fruitful connections with literary societies and key intellectuals who promoted national literary production.

By taking on the cause of Australian literature, public libraries added a significant voice to the wider movement to enhance the status of Australian literature, made powerful by their role as a public space dedicated to the promotion of elevating cultural practices sanctioned by the state. This chapter has also illustrated how the public library contributed to the development of an Australian national literary canon, through its selection and approval of certain authors and types of creative literature in its collections. Just as Hammond has observed in the British context, the public library in Australia helped to 'engender and to perpetuate' the literary canon, though in the Australian context this canon had overtly nationalistic rather than universalist overtones.²⁴⁷ The Australian public library played a role in socially legitimising national fictions. As the twentieth century progressed, approval for local literature became more widespread and inclusive, moving towards a position of active enshrinement of local culture by the 1930s, and expansion and consolidation of the canon.

Although, as Martyn Lyons has observed, there continued to be a 'yawning gap between what Australian writers wanted to write and what Australian readers were reading', readers of Australian fiction *did* become more common as the century progressed, a phenomenon stimulated not only by the efforts of literary nationalists and literary societies but also by widespread changes in society driven

²⁴⁷ Hammond, 'The Great Fiction Bore', p. 105.

by the Second World War.²⁴⁸ Presenting a paper entitled 'What People Read in Wartime', the librarian of the Hawthorn Public Library in suburban Melbourne, Mrs J Carbines, observed that readers' comments such as '*I don't like Australian books, but my son is at Darwin now. Have you any books about this part of Australia?*' were 'frequently made by borrowers these days', and 'people who had never before heard of Elsey Station were reading the books of Mrs Aeneas Gunn and of many other Australian writers'. The librarian concluded with the observation that 'the demand for Australian books had increased enormously'.²⁴⁹ Because of their ability to be responsive and adaptive, Australian public libraries in the 1940s were increasingly able to match this new demand.

²⁴⁸ Lyons, 'The book trade and the Australian reader in 1945', p. 404.

²⁴⁹ 'More Australian books read now', *Argus*, 29 July 1942, p. 5.

CHAPTER 7:

Preservation and promotion: heritage in the 20th century in the Australian public library

Introduction

This final chapter concludes the study of the will to archive in the Australian state libraries. Concentrating on the first half of the twentieth century, it charts the growth of the popular and professional perception of the Australian public library as an institution that deliberately preserved the heritage of the nation and the region. In his study of the British public library Alistair Black has written of the generalised conception of the library as a ‘history institution’, a ‘museum of literary culture’, offering a ‘symbolic reminder of society’s past intellectual achievements and ... heritage’.¹ He writes that in this popular perception, ‘the past and the public library are contingent subjects, indissoluble by virtue of the traditionalism and notions of continuity and inherited knowledge associated with each’.² In Australia, this perception of the ‘heritage’ role of the public library in relation to a specifically Australian (local and national) past became fully fledged only after the beginning of the twentieth century. As this thesis has demonstrated, the shift occurred as a result of ongoing constructive engagement of the public library with the emergence of local history, the impetus of nationalism and patriotism, and the growth of ‘scientific’ history.

This chapter explores the increasing sense of agency in the library profession to perform an essential archival service for the nation in the early- to mid twentieth century. This sense of agency was articulated in a piece in the *Canberra Times* dating from 1943, at the end of the period with which this thesis has been primarily concerned. In ‘Our Historical Records’, the *Canberra Times* correspondent complained of the past ‘neglect that has been in evidence in the matter of historical records’, particularly the failure to continue the publication of

¹ A Black, *A new history of the English public library: social and intellectual contexts, 1850-1914*, London; New York, 1996, p. 2.

² A Black, *The public library in Britain, 1914-2000*, London, 2000, p. 3.

the *Historical records of Australia* beyond the records of 1848, the last of which was published in 1925.³ However, the correspondent noted that:

While the story of the publication of our historical records does not reflect a proper appreciation of their importance on the part of Government authorities, it may neither be assumed that valuable work is not being done to preserve records against the time when they may become available to students of history, nor claimed that sufficient is being done to ensure that much of the knowledge that is now in the heads of the older generations of Australians shall be committed to paper and thus preserved for the nation.⁴

The correspondent considered that there had been in recent years ‘a more conscious endeavour, particularly by public librarians, to gather papers essential for the full record of Australia’, as well as greater efforts ‘to educate other authorities on the necessity for protecting against heedless destruction all public documents which may be important in compiling historical records’.⁵

Homage to the local and national past became normative in the public libraries in the 1920s through to the 1940s. Material remains of the past were increasingly actively sought, for their authenticity and for their direct relatedness to the project of articulating both state-centred and national histories. Public libraries found both the responsibility to acquire Australian material and the benefit of doing so, as scholars (and increasingly, the general public) accessed the collections and reputations based on the development of rich collections were established. The libraries also began to interpret and articulate the past more overtly, projecting developmental narratives of locale and nation through exhibitions from their historical collections. David Lowenthal has described this exhibitionary impulse, related to the archive, in his essay ‘Archives, heritage and history’. Lowenthal observes that ‘[n]othing begins life in an archive, and few things remain there forever’:

³ This significant collection of primary source material on colonial Australia had been progressively published by the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library in 33 volumes between 1914 and 1925, edited by Frederick Watson.

⁴ ‘Our historical records’, *Canberra Times*, 27 April 1943, p. 2.

⁵ *Ibid.*

When archived, family and state papers are initially confidential, heritage withheld from public view. Only after thirty or fifty or seventy years or more does general access outweigh concern for privacy; archival records then become public history. At length, if rare or sacred like Dead Sea Scrolls or Shakespeare first folios, documents may be showcased as collective heritage; their talismanic worth as tangible witnesses to some pivotal event or personality now surpasses their value as historical evidence.⁶

Chapter 7 addresses this transformation into ‘public history’, and the ‘showcasing’ of ‘collective heritage’ of Australian documents, records and printed material, in the Australian public library in the first half of the twentieth century. It first addresses the emergence of the historical archive, focusing on the major libraries in Melbourne and Sydney, and looks briefly at the situation in the other major libraries. The formation of official ‘Archives’ cared for by dedicated archivists in the various major libraries is described. The second half of the chapter addresses the enrichment of the local archive at the Tasmanian Public Library in the 1930s and 1940s, concluding with a summary of the articulation of heritage at the institution from the mid twentieth century to the present day.

The growth of the public historical sphere in the early twentieth century

The period 1920s to 1940s saw a ‘widespread renovation and restructuring’⁷ of the public historical sphere in Australia. This was evident in the ‘broad developing field of institutions concerned with exploring and expounding the Australian past’⁸ that included historical societies, public libraries and museums, government agencies, the press, schooling systems, pioneers’ groups and literary circles and associations. The antiquarian imagination that was evident in Australia

⁶ D Lowenthal, ‘Archives, heritage and history’, in FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, documentation, and institutions of social memory: essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 2006, pp. 199-200.

⁷ T Bennett, *The birth of the museum: history, theory, politics*, London; New York, 1995, p. 138. See also BH Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, Kensington, NSW, 1993.

⁸ S Macintyre and J Thomas, *The discovery of Australian history 1890-1939*, Carlton, Vic., 1995, p. 4. Maryanne McCubbin sees this as a loss of the ‘didactic power’ of history, which had been formerly in the hands of politicians and ‘boosters’, and identifies a shift towards the ‘democratic attribution’ of the colony’s foundation history. She also notes that ‘historical work began to concentrate on collecting historical sources rather than “making history”’: M McCubbin, ‘Object lessons: public history in Melbourne 1887-1935’, MA Thesis, University of Melbourne, 2000, p. 108.

as an amateur enthusiasm from the nineteenth century was paralleled in the twentieth century by professional practices in archaeology and history. In this period Australian history began to be taught in many Australian universities.⁹ Brian Fletcher writes (specifically in the New South Wales context) that those who promoted Australian history gradually won community support in the 1920s. He points to evidence of this in the *Sydney Morning Herald* articles in the late 1920s in which the growth of 'historical sense' was noted in the community, seen in the 'keen and sometimes acrimonious debates among members of historical societies, in the use of historical material by writers of fiction, the enthusiasm with which local districts celebrated centenaries and the "sedulous care" that went into local histories'.¹⁰ Genealogy also became recognised as a popular and serious practice from the 1930s, with the creation of the Society of Australian Genealogists in 1932¹¹ and the Genealogical Society of Victoria in 1941.¹²

In Victoria, the lead up to the 1934 centenary of white settlement prompted new popular interest in Melbourne's early decades, and 'stimulated interest in ... early historical records'.¹³ The Historical Society of Victoria planned an exhibition in May 1929 preparatory to the 1934 celebrations, and made a call in the local press for material such as 'old diaries, photographs, prints, drawings, club minute books, play bills, household utensils, or other relics of early life in Victoria' from the public, to make the exhibition 'as interesting and as instructive as possible'.¹⁴ Despite the Depression, the Victorian Centenary was marked by a large quantity

⁹ S Macintyre, '1992 Eldershaw Memorial Lecture: History, a school for state craft or, how shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 39, no. 3, 1992, p. 114. Professional Australian history emerged from the 1920s, promoting accuracy and accountability of records. In 1927, the first lecture on Australian history was given (by Professor Ernest Scott at the University of Melbourne), although it was another two decades before the first chair in Australian history was created in 1949, at the Australian National University in the national capital, Canberra. Griffiths observes that in this period 'university-trained historians became [the] priests' of the past: T Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors: the antiquarian imagination in Australia*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1996, pp. 210-11.

¹⁰ Fletcher, *Australian history in New South Wales 1888 to 1938*, p. 172.

¹¹ 'Society of Genealogists', *Sydney Morning Herald* (Sydney), 30 August 1932, p. 8.

¹² Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 223.

¹³ Joshua McClelland, 'Melbourne in the "Earlies"', *Argus* (Melbourne), 18 December 1937, Supplement, p. 4. John Holroyd notes that at this time 'some significant material came to light': J Holroyd, 'The Victorian Centenary celebrations in retrospect', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 34, 1984, p. 33.

¹⁴ 'Historical exhibition', *Argus*, 9 January 1929, p. 12.

of official history-making and celebrations, with a number of exhibitions in Melbourne arranged under the auspices of the Centenary Council over a nine-month period.¹⁵ In Maryanne McCubbin's words, the Centenary events 'were the biggest, sustained commemoration of history Melbourne had seen since the 1888 Exhibition', including over 300 events and projects.¹⁶ Major exhibitions included an art exhibition at the Commonwealth Bank in Collins Street, a maritime exhibition on a barque on the Yarra River, a manufacturers' exhibition at the Exhibition Building, the Centenary People's Fair on Batman Avenue, a technical schools' exhibition, photographic and philatelic exhibitions, and the Historical Exhibition arranged by the trustees of the Melbourne Public Library and National Gallery, held in the library building.¹⁷ The past had come to assume significant popular interest and to be articulated in a variety of ways that nurtured a sense of place and identity in the community.

Enrichment of historical collections in the major public libraries

The late 1930s saw the beginnings of major change for public libraries in Australia, focused, as David J Jones has written, on a 'growing awareness of the value of free public libraries across a broad spectrum of society, urban and rural'.¹⁸ Recognising that Australia was 'backward ... in library matters',¹⁹ the Library Association of Victoria approached the Carnegie Corporation of New York requesting the organisation to subsidise an inquiry into the condition of Australian libraries. The object was 'to place before the Australian people the facts in regard to the public provision of facilities for reading and research and show how we compare with other communities in this respect'.²⁰ The survey was conducted in June 1934 by Ralph Munn, director of the Carnegie Library in

¹⁵ McCubbin notes that the government was ungenerous with funds for the council, and ultimately many of the events were funded privately by a handful of prominent Melbourne businessmen. See McCubbin, 'Object lessons', p. 109.

¹⁶ McCubbin, 'Object lessons', p. 43.

¹⁷ 'Many exhibitions', *Argus*, 16 October 1934, p. 14.

¹⁸ DJ Jones, 'Public libraries: 'Institutions of the highest educational value'', in M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, p. 167.

¹⁹ Frank Tate, 'Introduction' in R Munn and ER Pitt, *Australian libraries: a survey of conditions and suggestions for their improvement*, Melbourne, 1935, p. 20.

²⁰ Frank Tate, 'A survey of Australian libraries', *Argus*, 2 June 1934, p. 9.

Pittsburgh, USA, and Ernest Pitt, chief librarian at the Melbourne Public Library. The results were published in 1935.²¹

The survey proved to be momentous. Its 'trenchant criticism'²² of library services in Australia prompted a significant change in attitudes to public library provision, to the degree that library development in Australia has at times been described in terms of 'Pre-Munn/Pitt' and 'Post-Munn/Pitt'.²³ John Metcalfe wrote in 1951 that the Munn/Pitt report 'had such a bettering influence on library provision in Australia that librarians have talked of a new time reckoning'.²⁴ The survey found that Australian libraries in general were in many ways in a worse position than fifty years previously, particularly in relation to funding sources.²⁵ While Ralph Munn was impressed by the 'splendid State libraries in Sydney and Melbourne, providing excellent reference facilities', he was very critical of the lack of municipal library systems, and the poverty of services for small towns and rural areas.²⁶ The report had little to say on the subject of the development of local and national collections, except to encourage their further expansion in general terms. The report urged the National Library to continue to perform 'national functions', including 'acting as a great depository collection, gathering and preserving the unusual and highly specialised books available to all accredited scholars through interlibrary loans', 'giving Bibliographical services to all other libraries', and 'collecting the historical records which pertain to Australia as a whole'.²⁷

In the major reference libraries, the search to enrich the local historical archive from sources within Australia increased in pace in the early twentieth century.

²¹ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*.

²² DJ Jones, 'Public library development in New South Wales', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 54, no. 2, 2005, p. 133.

²³ See for example, D Whitehead, 'AM and PM: the Munn-Pitt report in context', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 30, 1981, pp. 4-10.

²⁴ Quoted in J Balnaves and P Biskup, *Australian libraries*, Melbourne, 1966, p. 9. Boyd Rayward considers the report as 'probably the single most important document in Australian librarianship', providing the impetus for the development of a 'modern public library system and library profession in Australia': Boyd Rayward, in J Metcalfe and WB Rayward, *Developing a profession of librarianship in Australia: travel diaries and other papers of John Wallace Metcalfe*, Canberra, 1996, p. 16, note 2.

²⁵ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 84.

²⁶ 'What Australian libraries lack. Expert's criticism', *Argus*, 15 June 1934, p. 8.

²⁷ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 123.

This activity was largely prompted by historical and scientific societies, and interested individuals alert to the value of involving their state institutions as repositories for this material, or demanding improved services and facilities. The Early Colonists' and Natives' Guild of Victoria, formed in 1909 in competition with the Historical Society of Victoria,²⁸ wrote to the Melbourne Public Library in 1913 requesting 'facilities be afforded for collecting and collating the history of Australia including the taking of photographs and facsimile reproductions of early records'. At this time the library conceded only 'ordinary privileges' to the group.²⁹ By 1927 the trustees were more active in their engagement with such local amateur historical bodies, as they 'noted with approval' a 'resolution of the Historical Society of Victoria that no official records or documents held by government departments be destroyed without first being offered to the Public Library'.³⁰

Public donations of historical material increased as the century progressed, as historical consciousness in the community grew, and as the state institutions established reputations for collecting and appropriately conserving records, manuscripts and books relating to the region and nation. Minute books of the Melbourne Public Library show that the proportion of Australiana offered to the library for donation or sale, by members of the public and booksellers such as Angus & Robertson and Francis Edwards, continued to increase in the decades after Federation. With the increasing number of offers, the library made increasing numbers of purchases, including more items of higher cost. During the chief librarianship of Ernest R Pitt from 1931 to 1943 the activity of collecting Australiana and Victoriana continued to expand, even as overall library funds were reduced, particularly in the Depression years.³¹ Many purchases reflected

²⁸ See Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, pp. 208-10. The guild had similar aims to the Historical Society of Victoria, but a 'different style', the guild having narrow and hierarchical membership depending on settler pedigree.

²⁹ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 27 February 1913, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, State Library of Victoria (hereafter SLV).

³⁰ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 13 December 1927, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 43, MSF 12855, SLV.

³¹ D McVilly, 'A history of the State Library of Victoria, 1853-1974', MA Thesis, Monash University, 1975, pp. 162-163, 147. In 1929 the amount spent on printed material for the

the historical origins of Melbourne or Victoria, and there was also an interest in Tasmania, from the early plans and survey of Melbourne from the estate of Robert Russell, purchased in mid-1900,³² to the ‘fairly complete set’ of the *Hobart Gazette* from 1828-57 and 1878 for £20.³³ ‘Relics’ were purchased as well as documents, including items such as the ‘knife and fork’ of Captain Cook in 1906,³⁴ which joined the collection of ‘Flinders relics’ that had been donated by historian JJ Shillinglaw in 1900,³⁵ and the ‘relics of Captain Cook, consisting of pictures, maps, and a small celestial globe’ donated by the Mayor of Melbourne, Cornelius Ham.³⁶ Frequently trustees declined offers of documents and historical objects for sale or donation. Trustees minutes demonstrate that the quantity of refusals increased correspondingly with the number of offers over the decades. This selectivity was sometimes prompted by a limited purchasing budget. At other times it was clearly dictated by a perception of the type of collection that was to be formed in the institution, most obviously related to geographical and social relevance to its community, but also suggesting the creation of an implicit hegemonic (white, masculine) narrative of foundation, exploration, settlement and economic growth.

Wartime provided direct stimulus for increased archiving and historical presentation. As many commentators have noted, the First World War was widely seen as a defining moment of Australian nationalism, when Australians proved their dedication, resilience and patriotism (to king and country) on the war front and, by implication, as a nation. The impetus to actively acquire wartime

Reference Library was estimated at some £9,200; increasing cuts were made from 1931 and in 1933 it was down to some £4,600 (p. 141).

³² Minutes of meeting of Library Committee, Melbourne Public Library, 30 August 1900, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

³³ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee, Melbourne Public Library, 25 January 1906, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

³⁴ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee, Melbourne Public Library, 27 September 1906, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV. The items were purchased for 30 shillings.

³⁵ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee, Melbourne Public Library, 30 August 1900, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

³⁶ ELT Armstrong, *The Book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria: 1856-1906*, Melbourne, 1906, p. 48.

memorabilia reflects the desire to celebrate and record this new foundational narrative. The national War Memorial, Australia's first truly 'national' museum in conception and scope, was mooted in 1917 but not finally opened until 1941 in the capital city of Canberra.³⁷ The Australian War Records Section, set up in May 1917 in Britain, kept war documents and troops were instructed to collect (in the words of war correspondent Charles EW Bean) 'Australia's sacred relics', 'for future Australian museums'.³⁸ Bean observed that '[u]ntil a centre of all great future national research exists in Australia the Australian War Records Section which the A.I.F. has established will preserve and tenderly care for the sacred things which will some day constitute the greatest public possession Australia will have'.³⁹

In the absence of an active onshore War Museum, and in recognition of the central cultural role that war material played in the construction of Australian social identity, and solidarity with the Allies, some of the major public libraries took on a role of archiving war material. The Mitchell Library collected soldier's diaries during and after World War I, purchasing them in many cases.⁴⁰ JRG Adams, the principal librarian in Adelaide, began collecting 'war matter of a documentary character for the Library' from the beginning of the war.⁴¹ He noted that public response to the institution's appeal for material was 'gratifying'.⁴² At the Melbourne Public Library trustees published an appeal in the *Argus* in August 1916 calling for 'maps, diaries, newspapers and pamphlets issued in the war fields or on board ships of war, and any documents that are likely to be of interest to the historian of the future'.⁴³ The first presentation acknowledged in the minutes of

³⁷ For a discussion of the nationalising qualities of the War Memorial in the context of historical collections, see Bennett, *The birth of the museum*, esp. pp. 138-41.

³⁸ CEW Bean, 'The Australians records preserved', *Advertiser* (Adelaide), 11 December 1917, p. 8. The collections of the War Records Section formed the basis of the Australian War Memorial.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ David J Jones, email correspondence to the author, 14 October 2007. Interestingly, Brian Fletcher notes that at the Mitchell Library visitor numbers increased during the war (the opposite to the situation at the Sydney Public Library General Reference Library), possibly reflecting 'an upsurge in patriotic feelings, particularly after Gallipoli': B Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession: the story of the Mitchell Library*, Crows Nest, NSW, 2007, p. 67.

⁴¹ 'Historical war collections', *Advertiser*, 4 January 1918, p. 6.

⁴² 'Public Library Board', *Advertiser*, 21 December 1918, p. 15.

⁴³ 'Request by Public Library', *Argus*, 3 August 1916, p. 8.

trustees was made by scientist and anthropologist Baldwin Spencer, acting on behalf of Charles Bean who offered 'a copy of the "Rising Sun" (ANZAC newspaper) nos. 1-10'.⁴⁴ In the Second World War, the trustees again indicated their willingness to 'keep suitable historical material' relating to the state, in co-operation with Federal authorities.⁴⁵

Showcasing public heritage

As part of the promotion of expanding historical collections, exhibiting historical material in museum fashion became more important in the major public libraries in Melbourne and Sydney.⁴⁶ Exhibitions of other aspects of the collections had been a part of public library activity prior to (and during) this period, focusing on centenaries of canonical authors such as Shakespeare and Dickens, but exhibitions promoting local and national history became more prominent from the 1920s and especially in the 1930s.⁴⁷ At the Melbourne Public Library, the books committee

⁴⁴ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 24 May 1917, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁴⁵ Minutes of Books Committee meetings 10 September 1940, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁴⁶ John Thompson has criticised this type of activity at the Melbourne library as being antithetical (and distracting) to a properly rigorous archival approach to acquisition and use of manuscript collections: J Thompson, 'The Australian manuscripts collection in the State Library of Victoria: its growth, development and future prospects', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 6, no. 21, 1978, p. 9. The other state libraries did not exhibit their collections to the same extent. In Adelaide, despite finding a fine archival collection, the Carnegie survey recommended that more of the materials relating to the early history of the state should be 'available for inspection under glass, as in the case of the Mitchell Library in Sydney and the Public Library of Victoria': Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 71. In Western Australia, the survey found some archival documents 'on exhibition in the reading room' (p. 78). Tasmania was too starved of resources to contemplate this sort of activity in the period, despite some interest in doing so: see 'Hobart Public Library. Old prints and photographs', *Mercury* (Hobart), 30 April 1924, p. 5.

⁴⁷ The Melbourne Public Library presented a 'Shakespeariana' exhibition in 1916 to mark the tercentenary of Shakespeare's birth, and another in 1923 to mark the tercentenary of the publication of the first folio edition of Shakespeare's works. A 'comprehensive Dickens' Exhibition' to mark the centenary of the publication of the *Pickwick Papers*, was held in March 1936, and a display of rare editions of Chaucer in 1941. ('Shakespeare tercentenary', *Argus*, 29 April 1916, p. 9; 'Shakespeare first folio', *Argus*, 21 November 1923, p. 22; "'Pickwick" Centenary', *Argus*, 25 March 1936, p. 15; 'Public Library display', *Argus*, 5 July 1941, p. 5.) Martyn Lyons writes that literary celebrations, of which the public library displays were a part, flourished in Australia between the world wars 'as never before or since'. They 'assumed Australia's close attachment to British and European cultural traditions', and helped to define, challenge and elaborate the literary canon. See M Lyons, 'Literary anniversaries: commemorating Shakespeare and others, 1900-1940', in Lyons and Arnold, *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945*, p. 389. It is significant that a 'technological' exhibition opened in the Melbourne Public Library building in this period also, curated by the staff from the Museum. The exhibition featured 'everything of economic value to Australia', including Australian raw materials and design, as well as imported products of significance. The collection had largely been in storage since 1893,

had discussed the 'Establishment of a Historical Museum' as part of the library in 1919. The decision was made to 'prepare the old Newspaper Room' for such a facility,⁴⁸ but there was a delay of ten years before it came into being, due to government failure to find money to provide an attendant.⁴⁹ The approaching centenary of Victorian settlement provided the necessary government stimulus for funding, and the room was finally opened 'without ceremony' in October 1929, displaying what was to be a semi-permanent exhibition from the library's collection of 'portraits, pictures, manuscripts, printed documents, and objects of historical interest connected with the early days of Victoria'.⁵⁰ Public interest in the new facility, which according to Armstrong was 'great', was enhanced by a series of lectures.⁵¹

For the Victorian Centenary in 1934, the public library prepared a temporary exhibition that was displayed in the McAllan Gallery of the National Art Gallery (conjoining the public library) from October 1934 to April 1935. It included 'historical records of remarkable value and interest', according to the *Argus*. Many artefacts were supplied by the public, while others were selected from the Petherick and Alexander Dalrymple collections of the National Library in Canberra.⁵² The origination narrative (expressed throughout the Centenary

until trustees decided 'to provide for the re-establishment of the museum' in 1925: 'Technological museum. Many interesting exhibits', *Argus*, 28 January 1925, p. 8.

⁴⁸ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 31 July 1919, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 42, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁴⁹ ELT Armstrong and RD Boys, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1906-1931*, Melbourne, 1932, pp. 81-82.

⁵⁰ Armstrong and Boys, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1906-1931*, p. 82.

⁵¹ Armstrong and Boys, *The book of the Public Library, Museums, and National Gallery of Victoria, 1906-1931*, p. 81. Jock Murphy considers the Victorian Centenary provided a focus for 'renewed attention to the Library's Australiana collections in general': J Murphy, 'The development of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at the State Library of Victoria', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 47, no. 4, 1998, p. 339.

⁵² See 'Story of 100 years. Historical exhibition opened', *Argus*, 17 October 1934, p. 5; 'Historical exhibition', *Argus*, 19 May 1934, p. 22; and 'The Centenary. National Library treasures for exhibition in Melbourne', *Canberra Times*, 14 August 1934, p. 4. The Alexander Dalrymple collection was purchased in June 1934, and consisted of a substantial collection of material by and about Dalrymple, a contemporary of James Cook, to complement the Cook manuscripts purchased in 1923. See Edward Duyker, 'Propagandist, pamphleteer & cartographer, the Alexander Dalrymple Holdings', *National Library Magazine*, January 1998, www.nla.gov.au/pub/nlanews/1998/jan98/story-2.pdf, accessed 2 February 2010. The exhibition included material from a number of private individuals, some of whom donated the exhibits

celebrations in all their forms in ‘rural metaphors of growth, fertility and plenty’ as Tom Griffiths has observed⁵³) was articulated in the Melbourne Public Library exhibition through early manuscripts and journals, examples of print culture in the new colony in the form of early newspapers, and government orders.⁵⁴ The exhibition was arranged chronologically as the ‘story of 100 years’, ‘[taking] the visitor along the years from the time when Cook first sighted portion [sic] of eastern Victoria in 1770’, through to a ‘Homage’ to Bass, Flinders and Batman; while the diary of William Todd ‘who was left behind at Indented Head when Batman returned to Tasmania’ was open at the page ‘recording his discovery of William Buckley, the wild white man, who lived with the aborigines for more than 30 years’.⁵⁵ The story of Victoria told in the exhibition was resolutely triumphalist, depicting the growth of a state ‘largely self-made’ through various struggles of ‘the settlers with the authorities in Sydney’ and the political ‘fight for Separation’ from New South Wales.⁵⁶

This exhibition was followed by a two week exhibition in 1935 to commemorate ‘the arrival of John Pascoe Fawcner on the site of Melbourne’ that included portraits, illustrations and documents and early newspapers,⁵⁷ and in 1937 a further exhibition celebrating Australia’s sesquicentenary.⁵⁸ The new exhibitionary approach to the historical collections was marked in print (one of the ‘flood of historical books and pamphlets’⁵⁹ noted by the press at the time, prompted by Victoria’s Centenary) at the Melbourne Public Library with the publication of a ‘Guide to the Historical Collection’, produced in an edition of 5,000 copies.⁶⁰

permanently to the library. See Thompson, ‘The Australian manuscripts collection in the State Library of Victoria’, p. 10.

⁵³ Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, p. 166.

⁵⁴ ‘Story of 100 years. Historical exhibition opened’, *Argus*, 17 October 1934, p. 5.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ This narrative was described by AS Kenyon, President of the Victorian Historical Society, who opened the exhibition with EH Sugden, president of the library trustees.

⁵⁷ ‘Fawcner exhibition’, *Argus*, 23 August 1935, p. 8.

⁵⁸ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 25 November 1937, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁵⁹ ‘Searching family annals. The library and the Centenary’, *Argus*, 17 August 1933, p. 6.

⁶⁰ Minutes of Books Committee meetings 10 September 1934, 8 October 1934, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV. The surplus of 3,000 copies was made available to the Victorian Education

Lack of exhibition space and increasingly cramped conditions restricted the exhibitionary impulse in the public library in Sydney and the Mitchell Library in the first decades of the twentieth century.⁶¹ In 1919, an exhibition of selections from the joint collections of the libraries, featuring local and international material both contemporary and historical, had to be shown offsite in the galleries of the Education Department in Loftus Street, Sydney: a correspondent for the *Sydney Morning Herald* decried the fact that '[m]any priceless old treasures and informative trade and scientific works, like flowers that waste their sweetness on the desert air, have remained largely unseen and unread in the Public Library, because of the unsuitability of that institution for present-day needs, and on account also of its overcrowded condition'.⁶² By the late 1920s, however, as in Melbourne, the Mitchell Library began to offer on-site public exhibitions from its collections. In 1928 the library marked the bi-centenary of the birth of Captain James Cook with an exhibition that was, as Brian Fletcher notes, 'the most significant event of its kind yet mounted by the library'.⁶³ The popular response to the exhibition exceeded all expectations.

This invigorated exhibitionary impulse related to local and national history, seen from the late 1920s in the major state libraries, reflected not just professional pride in the growing collections and a response to public interest in local history, but also an emerging lexicon in the public library sphere of how the past might be shaped to tell a particular historical narrative. There is evidence that the major libraries in Melbourne and Sydney increasingly sought to interpret their own collections, and to 'make visible' the stories of the past, beyond the display of isolated 'curios' in antiquarian fashion.⁶⁴ These exhibitions also gave the public

Department for distribution. See Minutes of Books Committee meeting 13 May 1935, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV. Maryanne McCubbin has identified a significant quantity of publications related to historical exhibitions in the period of the Centenary, and suggests that the quantity of published histories demonstrated the history 'boosters' emphasis on the written word as central to twentieth century history-making: McCubbin, 'Object lessons', p. 114.

⁶¹ See Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, pp. 68-74.

⁶² 'Arts and science. Public library collection', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 29 July 1919, p. 6.

⁶³ Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, pp. 97-98. See also 'The bi-centenary of the birth of Captain Cook', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 30 October 1928, p. 14.

⁶⁴ The Melbourne Public Library's historical exhibitions were often arranged in collaboration with the Historical Society of Victoria, combining collections and utilising the expertise of the

library the opportunity to promote their own historicity ('historical embeddedness' in Chris Healy's formulation⁶⁵) and their contribution to foundational narratives. At the opening of the historical exhibition in 1934, president of trustees Dr EH Sugden noted that while 'the documents and pictures were all of great interest', '[p]erhaps the most notable of all the exhibits was the building itself', founded eighty years earlier.⁶⁶ Sugden articulated an antiquarian reverence for architectural age that was only just becoming available to a colony only a century old, tying fruitfully with the consolidation of the sense of 'heritage' of the collections within.

The libraries' new expression of their own historicity included narratives of philanthropic bounty. In Melbourne, the significant book purchases made possible by the major bequest of Alfred Felton to the Melbourne Public Library, Museum and Art Gallery were celebrated in an exhibition at the library in January 1933.⁶⁷ Books from Felton's bequest that were 'examples of art or illustrative of its history', were 'displayed in special cases'.⁶⁸ The Mitchell Library historicised its institutional origins with an exhibition in 1936 (noted above) that marked the centenary of the birth of the founder, David Scott Mitchell. This major exhibition showcased many of the library's finest documents and books in specially constructed glass cabinets,⁶⁹ and was marked in print by a descriptive publication by Mitchell Librarian Ida Leeson, through which she effectively promoted the institution and its collection to a national and international audience.⁷⁰

members of the Historical Society for public lectures. The 'curio' mentality to display can be seen at the Adelaide Public Library, where staff maintained a 'curio case in the Library' exhibiting items such as 'two specimens of submarine cable ... presented by the President of the Marine Board' in 1911: 'Public Library Board', *Advertiser*, 19 August 1911, p. 22.

⁶⁵ C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997, p. 79. Healy considers that the Cook exhibition at the Mitchell Library was an important moment in the 'nationalising' of Cook that occurred in the first decades of the 20th century (p. 29).

⁶⁶ 'Story of 100 years. Historical exhibition opened', *Argus*, 17 October 1934, p. 5.

⁶⁷ 'Book exhibition. Felton Bequest presentations', *Argus*, 9 January 1933, p. 6.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, p. 126.

⁷⁰ I Leeson, *The Mitchell Library, Sydney: historical and descriptive notes*, Sydney, 1936. Fletcher notes that Leeson posted invitations to the exhibition to international figures for promotional purposes. See Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, pp. 126-27.

The public responded enthusiastically to the new historical exhibitions and accompanying lectures, although the engagement with the Melbourne historical exhibition contrasts curiously with the reportedly limited appreciation of the exhibition at the Mitchell Library honouring the centenary of David Scott Mitchell's birth.⁷¹ In Melbourne the 'section of the library buildings devoted to relics and mementoes of Victoria's early history' was reportedly 'patronised more extensively' than in previous years.⁷² In 1935, the Munn/Pitt survey reported that the 'historical collection of maps, plans, views and manuscripts of early Victoria' was an 'important adjunct of the library', and was a 'popular attraction', although disadvantaged by being housed a 'considerable distance from the reading room'.⁷³

The official efforts to promote Victorian and Australian history, and the nostalgic and celebratory voyages embarked upon by visitors to historical exhibits, were matched by renewed public interest in accessing specific historical data for targeted research purposes. In August 1933 the *Argus* reported that librarians at the Melbourne Public Library 'have been attempting to answer an ever-increasing number of ... enquiries in the last few months', finding 'with the approach of the

⁷¹ A press correspondent wrote that the 'public takes little interest in the exhibition, the only persons who visit it and talk of it being the men (and a few women) who are always reading the history of Australia and who write about it either to societies or to the press': 'Sydney day by day', *Argus*, 24 March 1936, p. 8. It would be tempting to ascribe this assessment as being partly driven by interstate rivalry, the report appearing as it did in the Melbourne press. However, the correspondent was warmly enthusiastic about the value of the 'wonderful' Mitchell collection to the nation as a whole. Brian Fletcher notes that the exhibition was successful in generating more public attention to the Mitchell Library, and that the exhibition attracted 6,710 visitors 'many of whom said it was the first time they had entered the library': Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, p. 127.

⁷² 'Searching family annals. The Library and the Centenary', *Argus*, 17 August 1933, p. 6.

⁷³ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 51. At this time, Australiana was distributed throughout the library's reference collections according to Dewey classification, which meant that '[n]o complete conspectus of the Library's Australian holdings has been possible to the casual visitor', as librarian Colin McCallum wrote in 1956: CA McCallum, *The Public Library of Victoria, 1856-1956*, Melbourne, 1956, pp. 14-17. The Australiana collection, including archives and books, was dispersed around the library building, in the strong room, trustees room, Macarthur Basement, and Verdon Basement. See EW Russell and CL Farrugia, *A matter of record: a history of Public Record Office Victoria*, Nth Melbourne, 2003, p. 38. The creation of the La Trobe wing of the library, first conceived in 1951 and opened in 1965, finally brought together the Library's collection of Australiana. See T Marshall, 'The Australian manuscript collection', *La Trobe Journal*, vol. 12, nos. 47 & 48, 1992, p. 78.

Centenary Victorians are taking a keen interest in their family histories'.⁷⁴ Librarians reported that the demand had 'increased threefold' for the 'more than 2,000 books on Victorian history' in the library's collection: the 'pages of books that have lain unused for years have been turned once more, and antique maps and plans of early Victoria are copied and studied'. Fiction writers researching for their entries for the 'Centenary novel and short-story competitions' also frequented the library, seeking 'local colour in the pages of almost forgotten volumes'.⁷⁵

Australian and state history was also becoming more prominent in the other major state libraries. In Brisbane, where for various reasons the archiving and local historical impulse was significantly delayed in comparison to the rest of the country, the state library had no Australiana facility for the first four decades of the twentieth century.⁷⁶ The John Oxley Memorial Library, an initiative of the Historical Society of Queensland, was opened in April 1934 as part of the public library in Brisbane for the purpose of collecting historical material related to Queensland. Aware that not enough 'has been done in the direction of collecting and preserving historical records' in Queensland since it became a state, the Governor Sir Leslie Wilson spoke at the opening of the Oxley Memorial Library of 'several instances in which people had looked for some place to deposit historical records in their possession, and some had been sent to the Mitchell Library, out of Queensland, because there had been no home for them in this state'.⁷⁷ The Oxley library contained, at its opening, a collection of Australiana ranging from 'fiction, poetry, history, exploration, and war literature — as well as

⁷⁴ 'Searching family annals. The Library and the Centenary'. As noted in the early part of this chapter, interest in genealogy grew in this period, with the creation of societies to serve the new need.

⁷⁵ 'Searching family annals. The Library and the Centenary'. Vance Palmer shared first prize with his *The Swayne Family* (1934); the other joint winner was FS Hibble's *Karangi* (1934). Palmer also won the short story prize with 'Sea and Spinifex'. See 'Two Australian novels of the land', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 18 January 1935, p. 6.

⁷⁶ For an excellent description of this, and the progress to the establishment of the local archive in Queensland, see P Biskup, 'Australiana in Brisbane between the wars: a fairy tale for grown-ups', in F Upward and JP Whyte (eds.), *Peopling a profession: papers from the fourth forum on Australian library history, Monash University 25 and 26 September 1989*, Clayton, Vic., 1991, pp. 75-92.

⁷⁷ 'Oxley Memorial Library opened by Governor. Value to future', *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane) 6 April 1934, p. 15.

interesting documents'.⁷⁸ The Munn/Pitt report, which judged the Brisbane Public Library to be highly deficient in its function as a 'state' library, found the 'aim of the librarian to develop a collection of Australiana' to be commendable.⁷⁹ However, the report found that the 'policy of keeping it from public use by placing the section on Australian poetry in the librarian's office' as being 'calculated to defeat the main object for which this public institution was created'. In 1935 the library had failed to become a copyright depository, inhibiting its ability to enrich its local collections. The Oxley library was incorporated with the state library in 1943 as a library of Queensland history.

The new National Library in Canberra was finally opened to the public in October 1935, with the intention that 'the library should pay especial attention to historical material' in order to become 'a rich repository of knowledge, [and] a record of our history, which will deepen the pride in our traditions'.⁸⁰ In commenting upon the opening of the National Library, the *Sydney Morning Herald* clearly linked the emergence of the profession of history in Australia with the development of an appropriate historical archive, suggesting that the 'importance of this asset is strengthened by the fact that the writing of Australian history has now emerged from the partial and partisanship stage, and the work of expert historians ... is giving Australian history a solid scientific basis'.⁸¹

Competitive and collegial relationships between the major libraries in the formation of the local and national archive

Competition emerged between the major players in heritage collection, particularly the Public Library of New South Wales and the (nascent) National Library in the first four decades of the century. This long-standing rivalry and unproductive competition in purchasing manuscripts and literature relating to Australia negatively affected the relations between these major reference libraries for many decades and 'harmed the development of a distributed national archive',

⁷⁸ Ibid.

⁷⁹ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 62.

⁸⁰ 'The National Library', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 19 October 1935, p. 16.

⁸¹ Ibid.

in the opinion of David J Jones.⁸² Some attempts were made to divide responsibility for particular items on state lines. The Secretary of the Public Library in Adelaide wrote to the Melbourne Public Library 'suggesting that the State Libraries do not purchase documents relating to the early history of another State until the Library of that State shall have had the first refusal of the documents under offer'.⁸³ The books committee at the Melbourne Public Library recommended this course of action to their trustees 'if the proposal were universally adopted'.⁸⁴ This type of arrangement was most successful for those state libraries that sought to build their collections of heritage material related to the state, above those of more generally national interest. Exchanges of duplicates of Australiana were also frequent between the major state libraries. The Melbourne Public Library had a policy of holding no duplicates or multiple copies, in order to cover as great an area of knowledge with as economical use of space as possible.⁸⁵ The 'Australian Section' of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library established 'exchange relations'⁸⁶ with the Mitchell Library, including duplicates from the Petherick Collection. The exchanges were a delicate process, not all parties being always satisfied with the quantity and quality of the exchanged material.⁸⁷

The interest generated by James Bonwick in the late nineteenth century in making transcripts for Australia of key documents relating to Australia's history in the

⁸² DJ Jones, 'Manoeuvres of a man of principle: an investigation of WH Ifould', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 41, no. 3, 1992, pp. 159-79. See also G Powell, 'The quest for the nation's title deeds, 1901-1990', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 54, no. 1, 2005, pp. 55-65; and A Galligan, 'Cultural in-sites: a history of the National Library of Australia', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 49, no. 2, 2000, pp. 99-111, for the National Library perspective on the acquisition of Captain James Cook's journal in 1923, in competition with the Mitchell Library.

⁸³ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 20 October 1913, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 41, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁸⁴ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 20 October 1913, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 41, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁸⁵ McCallum, *The Public Library of Victoria, 1856-1956*, p. 13.

⁸⁶ AD Osborn and M Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, 1901-27 and the origins of the National Library of Australia*, Canberra, 1989, p. 129.

⁸⁷ In 1918 over 100 rare duplicates from the Petherick Collection were given to the Mitchell Library, but the return was not equal in value. Commonwealth librarian Binns complained that the Mitchell Library had in fact sold duplicates from Mitchell's collection to book dealer James Tyrrell without offering them to the Australian Section of the Commonwealth Library. This, Binns considered, was 'both unfair and unsatisfactory': K Binns to WH Ifould, 11 November 1922, quoted in Osborn and Osborn, *The Commonwealth Parliamentary Library, 1901-27*, p. 129.

archives in Britain continued in the twentieth century. There was a strong sense of the importance of primary sources for the growing number of Australian historians and history students, as well as government and other officials concerned with promoting Australia's international relations. John Metcalfe visited the Public Record Office during his tour of international libraries in 1934-35, and wrote that:

...students in Australia will always be at a disadvantage until such records as the Colonial Office papers in the Public Record Office are available in Australia in their entirety and in facsimile. Despite the resources of the Mitchell Library it is still true that many important aspects of Australian history can be more completely studied in London than in Sydney.⁸⁸

Australian libraries petitioned the British Government for the return of original documents from the Federation period until the 1930s, but with no success. In the 1930s, as Graeme Powell has written, the National Library, the Public Library of South Australia, the State Library of Western Australia and the Melbourne Public Library all applied to the British Government for the return of original colonial records.⁸⁹ Former politician and member of the Historical Society of Victoria, Richard Armstrong Crouch, wrote a letter in 1937 pleading legislation 'to enable the distribution of documents now in London among the dominions to whose history they relate'.⁹⁰ He requested particularly that the log of the *Lady Nelson*, recording the discovery of the region around the current city of Melbourne, be 'transferred to the Melbourne Public Library as a coronation gesture', recalling that 'a private request to the Admiralty to this effect at the time of the Melbourne centenary was not entertained'.⁹¹ The British Public Record Office responded to all requests by indicating that the Colonial Office must retain the originals, but that copies could be supplied.⁹²

⁸⁸ Metcalfe and Rayward, *Developing a profession of librarianship in Australia*, pp. 44-45.

⁸⁹ See Powell, 'The quest for the nation's title deeds', pp. 60-61.

⁹⁰ 'Historic documents relating to Dominions. Transfer from London urged', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 13 April 1937, p. 11.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Powell, 'The quest for the nation's title deeds', p. 61.

Individual libraries made arrangements to fill the gaps in their collections through copies. Both the Melbourne Public Library and the Mitchell Library arranged for transcriptions of documents from copyists such as Miss ME Deane in the first decades of the century.⁹³ In Adelaide efforts were extended to copying documents related to South Australia in the Sir George Grey collection held by the South African Public Library.⁹⁴ Joint efforts were also attempted. In 1911 the Australian Association for the Advancement of Science conveyed to the trustees of the Melbourne Public Library a 'resolution adopted by the Association in favour of duplicate copies of Colonial Offices Despatches being obtained for the Libraries of the Capital cities in Australia'.⁹⁵ The Melbourne library corresponded with other state libraries, and, in 1919, decided on joint collaboration with the other state reference libraries in Sydney and Adelaide to obtain copies of the governors' despatches to the Colonial Office in London, at an estimated cost of £60.⁹⁶ Substantial progress towards universal coverage of the Public Record Office material relating to Australia was made through the establishment of the Australian Joint Copying Project immediately after the end of the Second World War, instigated by the National Library and the Public Library of New South Wales.⁹⁷ Filming began in the Public Record Office in Britain in 1948. Powell writes that within ten years all the records from the Colonial Office dealing with the founding and early years of all the Australian colonies had been copied, as

⁹³ See John Metcalfe, 'Oversea [sic] archives. Mitchell Library's work', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 12 February 1945, p. 2. For a full description of this activity at the Mitchell Library see Fletcher, *A magnificent obsession*, pp. 92-94. At the Melbourne Public Library a report was commissioned in 1924 to assess the library's coverage of Victorian Governor's Despatches. Miss ME Deane, who undertook the report, offered to copy the missing parts of despatches 1851-60 from the London Records Office, while missing parts of the Port Philip despatches 1835-51 between NSW and Downing Street could be copied in Sydney. Trustees approved both actions. See Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 30 October 1924, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 48, MSF 12855, SLV; and Minutes of meeting of Books Committee 19 November 1925, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 42, MSF 12855, SLV. In 1930 the Melbourne Library received a complete set of 'photo-static reproductions' of the Garrison and General Orders printed for David Collins, Lieutenant Governor of the first settlement in Victoria from the Public Records Office in London: 'Victoria in 1803-4', *Argus*, 18 October 1930, p. 19.

⁹⁴ 'Public Library Board', *Advertiser*, 23 December 1901, p. 3; and 'Public Library Board', *Advertiser*, 18 May 1903, p. 3.

⁹⁵ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 23 February 1911, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁹⁶ Minutes of meeting of Library Committee 27 February 1913, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (good copy), vol. 47, MSF 12855, SLV.

⁹⁷ John Metcalfe, 'History in pictures', *Sydney Morning Herald*, 25 January 1946, p. 2.

well as other important documents such as the papers of explorers James Cook and Matthew Flinders.⁹⁸

Development of formal state archives in the major libraries

Interest in public records repositories for data produced by government at state and national level emerged in the twentieth century, closely related to public library function and development. As mentioned in Chapter 1, governmental archive formation in Australia was slow. In her history of the Australian national archives, Hilary Golder suggests that the 'concept of "archives" was difficult to grasp' for colonial Australians and for the first half of the twentieth century was 'mainly of interest to historians and librarians'.⁹⁹ Thus, even after Federation, Australia's archives remained scattered, through 'inertia' and 'sheer lack of information about these holdings'.¹⁰⁰ Piggott observes that the 'new nation's administrative machinery did not include a national archives or public records office', and that up to the Second World War 'successive Australian governments saw no cultural or administrative reason to compel them to establish an archives or a records regime'.¹⁰¹

Across the state libraries and the National Library, a degree of commonality is evident relating to formal archives creation. An awareness of the need for better management procedures for government archival collections in libraries appeared after the First World War, although in most cases the creation of archivist positions and formal archives in libraries was delayed by the Depression. There was typically no clear distinction between historical documents and formal records, private or public papers, or how these types of collections should be differentiated in acquisition and classification.¹⁰² Growing awareness of these issues can be seen in the library profession from the late 1930s, with the annual

⁹⁸ Powell, 'The quest for the nation's title deeds', p. 62.

⁹⁹ H Golder, *Documenting a nation: Australian Archives - the first fifty years*, Canberra, 1994, p. 5.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ M Piggott, 'Beginnings', in SM McKemmish and M Piggott (eds.), *The records continuum: Ian Maclean and Australian Archives first fifty years*, Clayton, Vic., 1994, pp. 2-4.

¹⁰² See Russell and Farrugia, *A matter of record*, pp. 40-41, for a description of this at the Melbourne Public Library.

Australian Institute of Librarians conference in 1940 themed around the topic.¹⁰³ The majority of state libraries created archivist positions to manage their distinct governmental archive collections by the end of the 1950s.¹⁰⁴

Having an established role as a receptacle of Australiana of all descriptions, the Mitchell Library was a logical focal point for the acquisition of public records in New South Wales. Mungo MacCallum raised the creation of a separate governmental archives repository in his role as President of the Trustees of the Public Library of New South Wales in 1911. However, the Mitchell Library continued to perform a role as ‘de facto’ archives for another four decades. As Alan Ventress notes, successive Mitchell librarians were ‘not at all concerned about purist arguments about differences between books and archives’.¹⁰⁵ A separate Archives Department was finally established in 1953 on the recommendation of John Metcalfe, principal librarian at the Public Library of New South Wales.¹⁰⁶

The Adelaide Public Library was the first of the state libraries to establish a discrete public archives department, in 1920. This, Carl Bridge suggests, was a product of very active interest in South Australian history in the community, and the specific contribution of Adelaide University historian Professor George Henderson, who was appointed trustee in 1903.¹⁰⁷ Henderson prepared a report for the South Australian Government ‘on collecting, storing, and classifying archives’, which was submitted to the board of the library in 1916.¹⁰⁸ The board adopted the report, recommending the ‘establishment of a historical documents department’, having ‘realised that one of its functions was the preservation of

¹⁰³ Golder, *Documenting a nation*, p. 10.

¹⁰⁴ Robert Sharman writes that ‘by 1960 a small archival profession had emerged in Australia, with a heavy preponderance of government archivists’: RC Sharman, ‘Introduction’, in P Biskup (ed.), *Debates and discourses: selected Australian writings on archival theory, 1951-1990*, Canberra, 1995, p. 2.

¹⁰⁵ A Ventress, ‘A tale of tension and neglect: state archives in New South Wales 1788-1960’, *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, p. 432.

¹⁰⁶ Ventress, ‘A tale of tension and neglect’, p. 438. The Archives Authority of New South Wales was established in 1961.

¹⁰⁷ C Bridge, *A trunk full of books: history of the State Library of South Australia and its forerunners*, Netley, S. Aust., 1986, esp. Ch. 8 ‘The Archives’.

¹⁰⁸ ‘General News. Archives and Art’, *Advertiser*, 1 November 1916, p. 6.

historical documents'.¹⁰⁹ Librarian George Pitt was appointed Archivist in 1919.¹¹⁰ In 1935 the Carnegie survey noted that the Adelaide archives department contained an 'excellent collection of unique public documents of the state, which are properly accessible only to accredited students'.¹¹¹ Librarians of the Commonwealth Parliamentary Library (the future National Library) sought formal provision for government archives in 1927 with the presentation of the first Archives Bill, but action on the Bill was postponed until 1944, when an archivist was appointed at the National Library to manage the Commonwealth Government records.¹¹²

At the Melbourne Public Library the acceptance of a role as the custodian of government archives dates from 1929, when the first public records were transferred to the library from the Victorian Historical Society,¹¹³ after which Victorian Government departments, including the Chief Secretary's department, education, lands, law, mines and public works began to make regular deposits.¹¹⁴ In 1940 concerns about the management of the collections (which were arranged in chronological order but otherwise uncatalogued and unclassified) prompted trustees to recommend the formation of a discrete 'Archives Department' within the library.¹¹⁵ Chairman of trustees AE McMicken met with representatives of the Historical Society, the Historical Department of the University and Legislative Council member WH Edgar to discuss the issue,¹¹⁶ and it was decided to procure

¹⁰⁹ Ibid.

¹¹⁰ Bridge notes that Pitt was not trained as an archivist, and created archives that were 'designed really as an historical records department of a library, with their contents released only for historical purposes'. Systematic control of Governmental records was not achieved: Bridge, *A trunk full of books*, p. 107.

¹¹¹ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 71.

¹¹² Piggott notes that the librarians of the national collection were 'strategically placed, standing between the historians and the administrators, close enough to the workings of government to understand what kind of records it produced but detached enough to suggest which of them had permanent value': Piggott, 'Beginnings', pp. 5-6, 8.

¹¹³ Russell and Farrugia, *A matter of record*, p. 38.

¹¹⁴ 'No archives officer', *Argus*, 23 July 1941, p. 4.

¹¹⁵ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 29 August 1940, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

¹¹⁶ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 10 September 1940, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

the appointment of a paid archivist.¹¹⁷ The Victorian government, however, was unwilling to fund such a position, particularly during wartime. A dedicated archivist was finally appointed in 1948, although even into the 1950s 'all archival material was treated as one collection, whether comprising government archives or private papers'.¹¹⁸ Librarian Colin McCallum noted in 1948 that the library housed 'some hundreds of thousands of papers forming the nucleus of a State Archives Department', and hoped that the day was 'not far distant when all these can be listed, classified and indexed so that from this great reservoir there may flow a ready and enlightening stream of historical information and detail...'¹¹⁹

At the public library in Western Australia, a first unsuccessful attempt to establish an archival repository for government records was made in 1923, when trustees approached the Cabinet with a scheme for preserving historical documents, letters and all 'original matter' relating to the state. The first state archivist was appointed in 1945.¹²⁰ In Brisbane, the need for an appropriate archives facility was raised at the opening of the Oxley Memorial Library in 1934. At the opening ceremony Professor Francis SW Cumbrae-Stewart, a founder and President of the Historical Society of Queensland and trustee of the new Oxley Library,¹²¹ raised the need for a government archives to preserve the books and official documents that 'were now being thrown out'.¹²² An archivist position was created as part of the library staff in 1959.¹²³

¹¹⁷ Minutes of Books Committee meeting 8 April 1941, Trustees of the Public Library of Victoria Minute book, Library and Books Committees, (rough copy), vol. 44, MSF 12855, SLV.

¹¹⁸ Murphy, 'The development of the Australian Manuscripts Collection at the State Library of Victoria', p. 340.

¹¹⁹ CA McCallum, 'Victorian historical collection', in C Barrett (ed.), *Across the years: the lure of early Australian books*, Seward, Melbourne, 1948, p. 34. McCallum also noted that the Historical Collection (as distinct from the nascent State Archives) contained 'more than 13,000 items' at this time (p. 27).

¹²⁰ This was Australia's first woman archivist, Mollie Lukis. See P Biskup, 'The Public Library of Western Australia', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 9, no. 1, 1960, pp. 3-10.

¹²¹ See Harrison Bryan, 'Cumbræ-Stewart, Francis William Sutton (1865-1938)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080189b.htm?hlite=cumbræ%3Bstewart>, accessed 3 February 2010.

¹²² 'Oxley Memorial Library opened by Governor. Value to future', *Courier-Mail* (Brisbane) 6 April 1934, p. 15.

¹²³ R Longhurst, *Library Board of Queensland: celebrating 50 years*, Brisbane, 1995, p. 7.

The growth of the public historical sphere in Tasmania, 1920s onwards

As I described in Chapter 1, historical consciousness emerged in Tasmania from practices of local history, genealogy, and even popular historical fiction, although unlike in the other states Australian history did not flourish in academic settings until the 1950s.¹²⁴ Stefan Petrow identifies ‘waves’ of interest in Tasmanian history in the twentieth century, in the 1920s in the wake of the First World War, and again in the 1930s after the Depression.¹²⁵ The idea of reforming the Historical Section for the Royal Society of Tasmania was raised in this first period, and a focus on enhancing the archive of local and state history was — as ever — a central concern. William Crowther spoke ‘rather emphatically’ on ‘the absence of early historical records of Tasmanian happenings’ at the meeting of the Royal Society on 10 November 1919.¹²⁶ Librarian AJ Taylor also spoke at the meeting, noting that ‘institutions like the Public Library and the Royal Society were unfortunate in that Governments came into power that had no sympathy with such important matters as historical records’.¹²⁷

In 1920 an anonymous letter to the editor of the *Mercury* pleaded for the local archive, writing of the urgency to establish in Tasmania ‘a home for our Tasmanian historical records: a home adequate to the wealth of literature which is slowly but gradually accumulating about our early history’.¹²⁸ The correspondent observed that:

¹²⁴ LL Robson, *A history of Tasmania volume II: colony and state from 1856 to the 1980s*, Melbourne, 1991, pp. 381-86. Stuart Macintyre considers that it was the ‘absence of links between the scholarly discipline and the various uses of the past, civic as well as popular’, that delayed the development of a historical profession in Tasmania: Macintyre, ‘History, a school for state craft’, p. 112. See also G Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history*, St. Leonards, NSW, 2000, pp. 205-208; and Griffiths, *Hunters and collectors*, esp. Ch. 9.

¹²⁵ S Petrow, ‘Conservative and reverent souls: the growth of historical consciousness in Tasmania 1935-60’, *Public History Review*, vol. 11, 2004, p. 132.

¹²⁶ ‘Historical records’, *Mercury* (Hobart), 11 November 1919, p. 4.

¹²⁷ Ibid. The government had not supported any specific archiving projects since the end of James Bonwick’s transcribing work in the late nineteenth century.

¹²⁸ Letter to the editor by ‘Derwentside’ (Carrel Inglis Clark), ‘A Tasmanian Historical Library’, *Mercury*, 5 April 1920, p. 8. Carrel Inglis Clark, journalist, clerk of the Legislative Council and son of the barrister and politician Andrew Inglis Clark, contributed a number of articles to the *Mercury* from 1919 on issues related to Tasmanian history, the writing of history and the importance of the local archive. My thanks to Tony Marshall for identifying this pseudonymous writer. See H Reynolds, ‘Clark, Andrew Inglis (1848-1907)’, *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://adbonline.anu.edu.au/biogs/A030378b.htm>, accessed 1 May 2010, for reference to Carrel.

...the coming generation will be the first of a long series who will look upon Australia as a whole — they will read and study in the mass the continent, as the Britisher to-day reads and studies Britain's history as a whole. ... The lack of such means of study here in Tasmania is a pretty severe handicap to the student of, say, the years from 1825 to 1856. He is forced to ferret here, there, and everywhere for documents and facts. They should be housed in one place, where they could be readily accessible to him. Is it too much to plead for some such institution as an historical library?¹²⁹

The Royal Society Library continued as a source for historical records, although it remained inaccessible to those in the population whose interest in local history had been whetted. However, growing awareness of the importance of wider and more effective access to the existing archived sources prompted the Royal Society to investigate the possibility of an 'index of historical and other scientific subjects of books contained in the libraries of the Royal Society, the University, the Parliamentary, and the Public library'. It was hoped that the index would 'reveal to the student where the work he is in search of may be found. It will also tend to save money in providing works of reference and value which may be already in the possession of another library.'¹³⁰ The matter was 'considered by the Library Trustees, and the Council of the Royal Society' and generally approved, although this nascent union catalogue proved too difficult at the time.¹³¹

The 'historical section' of the Tasmanian Royal Society was finally successfully re-formed in 1921. It aimed to celebrate key centenaries and — like its predecessor — to secure custody of important historical documents.¹³² The Section presented historical papers, some based on 'genealogical' sources such as

¹²⁹ 'Derwentside', 'A Tasmanian Historical Library', *Mercury*, 5 April 1920, p. 8.

¹³⁰ 'Historical Section, Royal Society', *Mercury*, 14 July 1922, p. 8.

¹³¹ Kenneth Binns recommended a union catalogue in his report on Tasmanian libraries in 1943. He suggested that because of Tasmania's small size and small overall book collections, it should make 'the fullest use possible of its reference and research materials' through a union catalogue including the Royal Society and the State Library, as well as taking advantage of new inter-library loan arrangements amongst the state libraries. See K Binns, *Library services in Tasmania*, Tasmania, 1943, p. 18. It is also important to note that, disproportionately in comparison to the other states, the richest and most significant collections of Australiana in Tasmania were held by private collectors, including WELH Crowther and Henry Allport, rather than in public collections.

¹³² S Petrow, 'The antiquarian mind: Tasmanian History and the Royal Society of Tasmania 1899-1927', *Papers and Proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania*, vol. 137, 2003, pp. 70-72.

private diaries, others offering themselves as ‘scientific’ histories of whaling and the guano trade (economic history with local flavour), and many on shipping, an important theme in the island state’s history. The Historical Section sought ‘definite data’ to resolve long-standing historical disputes, such as the exact landing place of Abel Tasman on the island,¹³³ and the ‘difficulty of arriving at a correct view of several questions of the day, namely Transportation and Responsible Government’.¹³⁴ They also stated their intention of making ‘a definite move towards the establishment of a repository for many of the valuable historical relics now in danger of being lost to the state’, although as Petrow notes, it is uncertain how well this was done. The Society made a call in the local press to the public for ‘the loan of, or at least a view of, documents, sketches, or references to the very earliest days of our island State’.¹³⁵

Tasmania’s first official body with a purely historical interest, the Historical Society of Tasmania, was formed in Launceston in February 1934, emerging from an awareness of the importance of the promoting the past to encourage the tourism industry, which was increasingly important to Tasmania’s economy.¹³⁶ Included in the aims of the society was the publication of a journal containing the historical records of Tasmania and to establish ‘Archives of Tasmanian records’ to record and preserve ‘the stories of the lives and works of the pioneers’.¹³⁷ At this time, J Moore-Robinson, librarian and publicity officer in the Chief Secretary’s Department in Tasmania, was given responsibility for organising the Tasmanian government historical records, performing an ‘archivist’ role in this capacity from the early 1920s to 1925.¹³⁸ In his role as trustee of the Tasmanian Public Library, he successfully moved a motion in April 1924 that trustees should act to make provision for a collection of historical photographs and prints in the

¹³³ Historical Section Report July 1927, in *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania 1927*, p. 215.

¹³⁴ Historical Section Report, in *Papers and proceedings of the Royal Society of Tasmania 1926*, p. 190.

¹³⁵ ‘Historical Section, Royal Society’, *Mercury*, 14 July 1922, p. 8.

¹³⁶ Petrow, ‘Conservative and reverent souls’, p. 134. See also D Young, *Making crime pay: the evolution of convict tourism in Tasmania*, Hobart, 1996.

¹³⁷ Petrow, ‘Conservative and reverent souls’, p. 137.

¹³⁸ Petrow, ‘The antiquarian mind’, p. 70.

library, suggesting that the trustees encourage such gifts by advertising in the local press.¹³⁹

Heritage at the Tasmanian Public Library from the 1930s

The Depression impacted negatively on the Tasmanian Public Library, affecting its ability to enrich its heritage collections, or even to operate an effective library service, as noted in previous chapters. Trustees complained that the ‘economics’, which made the provision of a proper library service ‘impossible’, deprived the community of an essential service in arduous times.¹⁴⁰ The library was unable to fulfil its traditional role, neither able to maintain ‘morale by providing helpful and stimulating recreational reading for the unemployed’, nor to provide the books necessary for the ‘study of economic problems’ and a ‘vocational education’.¹⁴¹ One newspaper correspondent found that in its impoverished position, the library could no longer act as a counter to the dangerous ‘parochialism’ present in the small state.¹⁴²

A well-attended public meeting was held early in 1933 to discuss the library’s finances, and a deputation from the meeting addressed the City Council. Predictably, the council refused to increase the library’s subsidy, citing the general financial difficulties experienced by the community as a whole as a consequence of the Depression.¹⁴³ Miller, whose diplomatic relationship with the library’s financial providers was increasingly strained by years of disappointment, observed that ‘the Tasmanian Public Library has never had a fair go from the start’.¹⁴⁴ In particular, Miller expressed concern that the reference section, a

¹³⁹ Minutes of meeting 29 April 1924, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁴⁰ ‘Library finances’, *Mercury*, 19 September 1933, p. 7. The library’s subsidy for 1932 was a modest £1605, a decrease of £627 from 1929.

¹⁴¹ Trustees Annual Report, June 1933, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office (hereafter TAHO), Hobart.

¹⁴² TF Portnell, letter to the editor, ‘Public Library. Justification of existence’, *Mercury*, 10 March 1933, p. 8.

¹⁴³ Hobart City Council Finance Committee, letter to Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 6 March 1933, in Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁴⁴ ‘Public Library. Question of funds ... Professor Miller’s comments’, *Mercury*, 8 March 1933, p. 2.

‘costly and indispensable service’, essential ‘to preserve the works of the present for the disposal of readers of the future’, was degraded. He observed that the library had ‘no entrenched position to retire to when financial reductions forced it back, and were it not for the generosity of individual citizens the situation would be almost hopeless’.¹⁴⁵

The Carnegie survey, undertaken in Tasmania in June 1934, marked the beginning of the reversal of the library’s fortunes. Ralph Munn and Ernest Pitt’s report on the Tasmanian Public Library was scathing, finding the institution to have ‘serious shortcomings’.¹⁴⁶ They blamed the state of the library on ‘indifference and inefficiency’ and, in a challenge to Miller’s frequently repeated assertion that the Australiana collections were the best outside of Victoria and New South Wales, found it ‘in no way comparable with the fine reference libraries in other capitals’.¹⁴⁷ The survey described the library as having ‘what is perhaps the largest uncatalogued collection in any public library in the world’, focusing criticism on the treatment of the Walker collection:

The arrears of cataloguing certainly cannot be overcome with the present staff. The recent addition of the Walker collection makes the situation even more acute. Unfortunately little or no value has been placed in library technique since the foundation of the library, and the result is a distressing collection of uncatalogued or badly catalogued material.¹⁴⁸

On a (rare) positive note, the report commended the structure of the Tasmanian Public Library, combining its state and municipal libraries, with state and municipal governments cooperating in the maintenance of a single library.¹⁴⁹

After the Carnegie Delegation visit and the publication of the Munn/Pitt report, the Tasmanian Public Library successfully appealed to government and city

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 27.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.

¹⁴⁸ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 85.

¹⁴⁹ Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 124.

council for increased funding.¹⁵⁰ As noted in Chapter 6, Miller ensured that the reference section received the small funds for collection development that were available at this time. The Australiana in particular continued to be built by the exchange and sale of duplicates from the Walker gifts.¹⁵¹ To legally consolidate the position of the library on the sale of duplicates, a Bill was passed in Parliament in 1934 to amend Clause 5 of the Tasmanian Public Library Act of 1902, 'enlarging the powers of the Trustees with regard to the disposal of books or other property vested in them'.¹⁵² By September 1935, the library had received 'some £80 for duplicate copies, the volumes sold having been replaced by £132 worth of Australiana'.¹⁵³ Not all duplicates were removed, the library retaining additional copies where the importance of the volume merited it.¹⁵⁴

Exchanges were arranged with other libraries to enhance the collection. Walker's gift had included a large number of volumes of the *Historical records of*

¹⁵⁰ After a further library deputation had waited on the Hobart City Council in 1934 and had been refused its request for increased subsidy, the Tasmanian Government increased its subsidy by £220 to make its annual contribution £900. See Minutes of meeting 22 May 1934, Minutes of Meetings of the Hobart City Council, MCC16/129, TAHO, Hobart. The city council was shamed into action, voting an additional £150 to the library, and then increasing its vote soon after by another £100, making its annual contribution £1,100 in 1935.

¹⁵¹ An agreement was drawn up in 1923 between Collier, Miller and Walker, which included the special provision that duplicates could be exchanged at their full value for works of a similar character, at the discretion of the trustees: WA Woods to Caroline Walker, 2 September 1935, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵² Minutes of meeting 29 October 1934, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵³ WA Woods to Caroline Walker, 2 September 1935, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart. The first duplicate to be sold was a copy of William Henry Breton's *Excursions in New South Wales, Western Australia, and Van Diemen's [i.e. Diemen's] Land, during the years 1830, 1831, 1832, and 1833* (one of several copies in the second Walker bequest), sold to the Governor of Tasmania, Sir Ernest Clark, for 3/6. In April, Clark purchased a further £15/18/2 worth of duplicates. WELH Crowther was also involved with the sales, purchasing duplicates for £1/13/0, and offering to exchange two bound volumes of the *Hobart Town Gazette* of 1828 and 1829 for four volumes from the Walker Collection. See Minutes of meeting 26 March 1934, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart. Clark had developed an interest in Tasmanian history, and 'visited every accessible district'. Since part of the conditions of his governorship was that he would spend 'a considerable sum from his private resources as well as part of his salary', his purchase of these volumes from the public institution may have also been politically expedient. See John Reynolds, 'Clark, Sir Ernest (1864-1951)', *Australian dictionary of biography online edition*, <http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A080006b.htm?hlite=clark%3Bernest>, accessed 4 February 2010.

¹⁵⁴ *Norman Lindsay's Book II*, is one example, as are Walker's copies of JS MacDonald's *The art and life of George W Lambert* which were given in the first and second gifts, and a third copy that was in the library prior to Walker's first gift was also retained.

Australia. Collier wrote to the University of Tasmania wondering if the University Library held ‘any odd volumes’ of the *Historical records*, hoping that the volumes could be transferred to the library, ‘to make up a complete new set of this work, as far as it has been published’.¹⁵⁵ Exchanges were also arranged with interstate institutions, particularly with the Melbourne Public Library. In January 1934, acting on a suggestion from Miller, Collier wrote to the chief librarian Pitt suggesting an exchange of the Melbourne Public Library’s duplicate copy of Kentish’s *Report on the NW quarter of Van Diemen’s Land* (1846) for N Walter Swan’s *Luke Mivers’ harvest* (1899) from the Walker gift. Collier argued that the Swan volume would be of interest to the Melbourne library, given its Victorian setting, and the fact that it was published in Stawell — also that it had ‘won a prize of £100 for the best Australian novel’.¹⁵⁶ The exchange was agreed upon, and Collier wrote to Pitt again in July, offering duplicates of the *Hobart Town Gazette*.¹⁵⁷ Pitt accepted the further exchange, and sent a list of the Melbourne Public Library’s duplicates, from which Collier selected ‘literary and historical’ material.¹⁵⁸ Disposals of Australiana duplicates provided the library with necessary funds to continue to enrich the collection, proceeds of sales being exclusively spent ‘on the purchase of other items of Australiana’.¹⁵⁹

In comparison to the flurry of public interest in Australiana in the libraries in Melbourne and Sydney, however, public awareness of the Australiana collection in Tasmania was low. In 1934 Collier wrote glumly to George Mackaness regarding the Walker Australiana that ‘[t]here is little public appreciation here of

¹⁵⁵ JDA Collier to the Librarian, University of Tasmania (EM Miller), 26 April 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart. Miller was part-time librarian at the University library from May 1919 to November 1945, and in this role helped to facilitate exchanges with the Tasmanian Public Library.

¹⁵⁶ JDA Collier to ER Pitt, 30 January 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart. Collier requested the imperfect copy of Kentish’s *Report*, knowing that the Melbourne Public Library would be able to retain its complete copy.

¹⁵⁷ *Hobart Town Gazette* 1836-61 complete except for some missing gazettes from 1836, some additional gazettes from 1862 to 1865, and the index volume were offered. See JDA Collier to ER Pitt, 9 July 1934, and 26 September 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵⁸ JDA Collier to ER Pitt, 5 October 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁵⁹ Minutes of meeting 30 July 1934, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart. Other dealers were also involved in sales, including Albert Spencer, of the Hill of Content Bookshop in Melbourne. See JDA Collier to AH Spencer, 8 May 1935, SLT1/11/1, TAHO, Hobart.

the value of such works and those who do understand are not energetic'.¹⁶⁰ Mary Ann Walker (who had family in Queenstown on the western side of the state) wrote to Collier that 'I found hardly any of the people on the West Coast knew of the library he gave to the citizens, and very many students come to the schools and university here'.¹⁶¹ Miller summed up the case in 1954 when he stated that, despite the fact that Walker's gifts 'gave the library a standing among mainland institutions', '[t]his wonderful gift did not stir the civic conscience'.¹⁶²

In part, the low profile of the Australiana collection was due to the public profile of the library itself which was at this time at its lowest point since the re-opening in 1870. The principal tourist publication, *Historical brevities of Tasmania* (1937), written by J Moore-Robinson for the Tasmanian Government Tourist Bureau, neglected to describe the library among the 151 entries. The single reference to the library appears in relation to its historical collection, in an entry describing David Burn's *Narrative of the overland journey of Sir John and Lady Franklin and party from Hobart Town to Macquarie Harbour* (1842) 'a copy of which is in the possession of the Public Library, Hobart'.¹⁶³ Neither did George Porter, in his *Wanderings in Tasmania* (1934) mention the Tasmanian Public Library, despite describing the Tasmanian Museum, the Governors Residence, Houses of Parliament, University, Zoo, Botanical Gardens, theatres, and 'monuments'.¹⁶⁴

In addition, the Australiana collection was poorly housed and largely undocumented, lacking a comprehensive shelf list or catalogue accessible to either the public or the library staff. The problem of housing was a public one, as the Walker books remained stacked in inconvenient piles in the corridors and basement of the library for months after acquisition. One member of the public, writing under the pseudonym 'Australiana', approved a suggestion of closing the

¹⁶⁰ JDA Collier to G Mackaness, 1 March 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶¹ MA Walker to JDA Collier, March 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶² EM Miller, 'Some Tasmanian library memories 1913-43 IV. The Walker Collection', *Library Opinion* (Hobart), vol. 2, no. 6, 1954, p. 22.

¹⁶³ J Moore-Robinson, *Historical brevities of Tasmania*, Hobart, 1937, p. 76. This is all the more remarkable given Moore-Robinson was a trustee of the library.

¹⁶⁴ G Porter, *Wanderings in Tasmania*, London, 1934, p. 161.

Lending Branch in order to accommodate the new Walker volumes, suggesting that the new facility 'could be known as the Australiana room'.¹⁶⁵ 'By this action', the correspondent considered, 'there would be added attraction to the Library'.¹⁶⁶ The lending library was subsequently divided in 1935 to create an 'Australian Room' to house the Walker collection. This room was formally opened in 1935, in conjunction with the unveiling of a photographic copy of a portrait of Andrew Carnegie, presented to the library by the American Library Association to mark the centenary of the philanthropist's birth.¹⁶⁷ It is likely that only a small portion of the collection was housed in this room, and much of the material remained in the librarian's office. Miller was compelled publicly to state at the ceremony that the 'housing of the William Walker collection was not a fitting recognition' of Walker's philanthropy to the institution.¹⁶⁸

Despite ongoing funding and housing problems, library staff nurtured growing pride in the Australiana collection and sought to engage Tasmanians more actively with their history and literature through it. Collier had observed at the Carnegie function in 1935 that the Australiana collection was now 'available to research workers and students of the future. Books were yet to be written on all branches of Tasmania's history, and the library had the necessary material'.¹⁶⁹ There was a small but growing interest in the collection from scholars, and on a number of occasions the library lent out volumes from the Australiana in the reference collection.¹⁷⁰ By 1950 Collier was able to report to trustees that the

¹⁶⁵ Letter to editor by 'Australiana', *Mercury*, 26 October 1933, p. 6. Closing the lending branch was never an option as the lending library had been stipulated in the Carnegie bequest. Nevertheless, the lending library was experiencing its lowest point, with no money to purchase new works. Borrowing had dropped to 18,000 or 19,000 items a year in 1934, the lowest total since the free lending branch was opened in 1907. See JDA Collier to EM Miller, 28 May 1934, SLT1/1/11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁶ Letter to editor by 'Australiana', *Mercury*, 26 October 1933, p. 6.

¹⁶⁷ Minutes of meeting 28 October 1935, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁸ 'Andrew Carnegie benefactions remembered', *Mercury*, 24 December 1935, p. 3. The library struggled with accommodation: 'in practically every department books, periodicals, newspapers and other material had to be accommodated on the floors': Minutes of meeting 24 February 1936, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 29 July 1929-29 June 1936, AA827/1/7, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁶⁹ 'Andrew Carnegie benefactions remembered', *Mercury*, 24 December 1935, p. 3.

¹⁷⁰ Mary Ann Walker criticised this practice. She wrote to Collier that she was 'amazed to learn that the practice of allowing books to be lent to persons of repute was in order. Do you consider

‘whole collection’ of the William Walker Collection of Australiana was ‘very much in use’, and recommended the ‘making of a research catalogue of the material’ for better access.¹⁷¹

In the 1940s staff member EB John promoted the collection in the local press, focusing attention on the library’s new ‘heritage’ credentials. In early 1940 he penned a number of popular and accessible articles on elements of the Walker Australiana. In January he wrote on the pirated edition of Charles Dickens’ *Pickwick Papers*, printed in Launceston in 1838-39.¹⁷² In a second article, written in February, John credited the ‘establishment of the Walker collection of early Australian works’ with inspiring ‘gradual awakening of the average man to the possible value of old books and pamphlets’.¹⁷³ People were ‘less likely now to consign piles of worn-out books to the copper fire just because they are out of date’, John considered, although the lesson had ‘come a little too late’ for much Tasmanian material. He urged attention to the ‘many private libraries and bookshelves throughout the State’ that may still be a reserve of historical material needed to enrich the local archive.¹⁷⁴

John made a further ‘plea for preservation’ for written and printed records in another article in April 1940, observing that:

Old diaries have been destroyed that would have provided complete pictures of their period... The loss of portion of the Knopwood diary is sheer calamity... Thomas George Gregson is supposed to have

for one moment that any book of the Mitchell Library Sydney or the Petherick Collection Canberra would be allowed beyond the walls of their respective buildings?’: MA Walker to JDA Collier, [n.d.], SLT1/11/1, TAHO, Hobart. The loan of reference books was a practice that had been officially sanctioned since 1918, when the Librarian was instructed by the Trustees to ‘draw up rules to permit the lending of books from the Reference Branch to approved readers’: Minutes of meeting 31 May 1918, Minutes of the meetings of the Board of the Trustees of the Tasmanian Public Library, 26 January 1915-25 July 1927, AA827/1/5, TAHO, Hobart. The Munn/Pitt report commented on the Tasmanian practice of lending books from the reference collection, noting that ‘the Tasmanian library is the only state library which adopts the practice’: Munn and Pitt, *Australian libraries*, p. 85.

¹⁷¹ JDA Collier, Report to Chairman of the Tasmanian Library Board, ‘State Library of Tasmania staffing and accommodation’, 12 May 1950, SLT11, TAHO, Hobart.

¹⁷² EB John, ‘Launceston print of “Pickwick”’. Walker collection curiosity’, *Mercury*, 27 January 1940, p. 3.

¹⁷³ EB John, ‘Tasmanian Classics. Some historic volumes’, *Mercury*, 3 February 1940, p. 3.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

possessed it. At his death, his effects were sold, and presumably the diary with them. After that it disappeared. It is possible some of the early records still exist. If so, their owner's duty is clear, to place the book or diary, or at least a copy of such, where it may be of use to students and historians of the period. It will, perhaps, not be out of place to point out that one obvious such institution is the Tasmanian Public Library.¹⁷⁵

John concluded that the library trustees would 'receive readily any other records' of local historical interest which would be 'carefully preserved'.¹⁷⁶ This was a period in which prices for Tasmaniana 'increased enormously', in Clive Turnbull's words: '[n]ot much Tasmaniana [was]... to be found in the shops' as it cleared quickly into private collections and the quantity of material on the market diminished.¹⁷⁷

The creation of State Library of Tasmania and Tasmanian Archives

In 1943 the principal librarian of the National Library, Kenneth Binns, was appointed to prepare a report with recommendations for the future of the Tasmanian Public Library, to resolve its many difficulties.¹⁷⁸ Binns recommended the creation of a state library for all of Tasmania funded entirely by state government, with an expansion of services for the whole state. Binns proposed three main sections for the new institution, including a reference and general section, a country section, and a Hobart lending and children's section. With his background managing the Australiana collection at the National Library, Binns accorded great importance to the enrichment of national and local collections.¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ EB John, 'Capt. Cook's tree. Loss of valuable record of Tasmanian history', *Mercury*, 13 April 1940, p. 10.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷⁷ C Turnbull, 'Van Diemen's Land for the collector', in C Barrett (ed.), *Across the years: the lure of early Australian books*, Melbourne, 1948, p. 60.

¹⁷⁸ See K Walpole, "'High noon" for Tasmania's libraries: background and consequences of the Libraries Act, 1943', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 5, no. 2, 1997, pp. 175-87, for a full discussion of this period and the important role of the Free Library Movement in Tasmania.

¹⁷⁹ Binns' 1948 report on the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library included a section on 'Rare and valuable items, including Australiana', of sufficient value to be kept 'in a special locked room' as an appendix at the end of the report. The list numbered only thirteen items, only a few of which — such as *Godwin's Emigrant's guide to VDL* (London 1823) — were specifically Tasmanian. Expecting to find 'valuable early Australiana', Binns was disappointed, hoping to find 'considerably more items of rarity and high market value, especially early Tasmanian printings' than he in fact did: K Binns, *Report to the Tasmanian Parliamentary Library committee*, Hobart,

He unsurprisingly recommended the '[b]uilding up of the main reference collection, also special collections such as Tasmanian documents, maps, prints, music, &c' at the reformed library.¹⁸⁰ Binns' report led directly to the enactment of the Tasmanian Library Bill on 16 November 1943.¹⁸¹ This established the new State Library of Tasmania, served by a library board of twelve members instead of the old trustees' board of eight members.¹⁸² The legislature alleviated the financial difficulties that had dogged the library since its inception, and relieved the Hobart City Council of their portion of financial responsibility.

Robert Sharman, the State Library of Tasmania's first Archive Officer, writes that it was 'one of the tragedies of Tasmanian historical study' that during the 1920s and 1930s 'many individual documents were removed from official custody, and sold to mainland collectors'.¹⁸³ He suggests that it was a 'growing sense of pride in the Island's achievement, gradually eclipsing shame and sensitivity over the convict era in the past' that prompted Tasmanians to more actively protect public records.¹⁸⁴ The Tasmanian Public Records Act 1942, which set up a framework for appropriately conserving government records in a State Archives, was not initially related to the Tasmanian Public Library. Miller led an effective delegation to government that urged 'the desirability of associating the work of the State Archives with that of the ... State Library'.¹⁸⁵ Sharman was appointed as Archive Officer in 1949, to manage historical records of all types, and was sent to

1948, p. 5. For the Launceston Library Binns recommended that a 'historical and local archives section' should be established, as 'repository' available for 'future reference and study'. See S Petrow, *Going to the mechanics: a history of the Launceston Mechanics' Institute 1842-1914*, Launceston, 1998, p. 138.

¹⁸⁰ Binns, *Library services in Tasmania*, p. 25.

¹⁸¹ Walpole, "'High noon" for Tasmania's libraries', p. 184.

¹⁸² Conflict between the Tasmanian Public Library trustees and the Free Library Movement prompted EM Miller's resignation from position of trustee in 1943. Miller found he 'had no place in the new State Library of Tasmania', disagreeing with the reforms proposed by Kenneth Binns because of their support of the Free Library Movement: M Roe, *Nine Australian progressives: vitalism in bourgeois social thought, 1890-1960*, St. Lucia, Qld, 1984, p. 305.

¹⁸³ RC Sharman, 'Tasmanian Archives and the Eldershaw tradition. The 1975 Eldershaw Memorial Address', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 22, no. 2, June 1975, pp. 85-86.

¹⁸⁴ Sharman, 'Tasmanian Archives and the Eldershaw tradition', p. 87.

¹⁸⁵ Sharman, 'Tasmanian Archives and the Eldershaw tradition', pp. 87-88. The State Archives were re-named 'Archives Office of Tasmania' in 1965.

train for a year at the Mitchell Library before taking up his duties in 1951.¹⁸⁶ The State Archives were consolidated for the first time in the vaults under the Public Buildings in Franklin Square, in central Hobart. Colonial records, including those of the Convict Department, were transferred to this repository.¹⁸⁷ At this time maturing interest in Tasmania's past was formalised in a new historical society, the Tasmanian Historical Research Association, established in 1951 as 'an association for academic historians'.¹⁸⁸

A new library building for the State Library of Tasmania was opened in September 1962, in Murray Street, in central Hobart. The Archives joined the rest of the library collections, on the second floor of the new building, with the Australian and Tasmanian collections around its walls. These records, books and manuscripts were made 'available for academic study and some public access'.¹⁸⁹

Further enrichment of the Australiana collections

The State Library of Tasmania received two further major gifts that enriched its Tasmaniana and Australiana in the second half of the twentieth century. In April 1964 William Crowther, who had been William Walker's physician and fellow collector, donated his Australiana collection to the State Library of Tasmania after nearly a decade of negotiation regarding appropriate housing.¹⁹⁰ The collection

¹⁸⁶ R Eastley, 'Using the records of the Tasmanian Convict Department', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 9, 2004, p. 139.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Sharman notes that prior to 1949, very little systematic work had been done on the preservation of the official records of Tasmania. The archives of the various government authorities were in the main allowed to rest in vaults, store-rooms and attics associated with the premises in which departments were placed': Sharman, 'Tasmanian Archives and the Eldershaw tradition', p. 85.

¹⁸⁸ RC Sharman, 'The Tasmanian Historical Research Association: notes on the beginning of the Association', *Tasmanian Historical Research Association Papers and Proceedings*, vol. 42, no. 4, December 1995, p. 214. E Morris Miller became a patron of the association, and presented a number of papers at early meetings.

¹⁸⁹ P Eldershaw, 'The Tasmanian State Archives', in RF Fagan and JND Harrison, *The stage coach: a journey through Tasmania*, Hobart, 1964, p. 71.

¹⁹⁰ For a full description of Crowther's collecting practice and donations, see T Marshall, 'The choosing of a proper hobby': Sir William Crowther and his library', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 56, nos. 3 & 4, 2007, pp. 405-17. See also T Marshall, 'The State Library of Tasmania's heritage collections', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1993, pp. 52-54; C von Oppeln, 'William Crowther a biographical sketch', in G Winter (ed.), *Tasmanian insights: essays in honour of Geoffrey Thomas Stilwell*, Hobart, 1992, pp. 212-26; and C Wesley, 'A survey of the WL Crowther Library State Library of Tasmania', *Great Circle*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1979, p. 44-59. For a self-description of Crowther's collection, see WELH Crowther, 'My collections': Three

was a very significant one, consisting of books, manuscripts, photographs, works of art and objects. In May 1965 collector Henry Allport died, leaving a Tasmaniana and Australiana collection enriched over a number of generations of Allport collectors to the State Library.¹⁹¹ The origin of the library's Australiana collection through the self-effacing William Walker's donations was obscured by the time the Crowther and Allport collections came to the library. William Crowther wrote in this period that Walker's Australiana collection had been 'the standby of the Archives section' and an 'excellent working Library', but that 'little acknowledgment of its creator has so far been made, for his generous gift of his Library to the community has almost been forgotten'.¹⁹²

The Launceston Public Library became part of the State Library of Tasmania in 1972. This library, which had begun as the Launceston Mechanics' Institute, had a rich collection of heritage materials, including a strong local studies collection with material from the 1850s onwards.¹⁹³ This collection, established as a repository for 'historical and local archives' had been stimulated by the 1943 report written by Kenneth Binns.¹⁹⁴ The Launceston Public Library collection had been enriched in 1954 with the donation of the private library of Archibald Meston. These collections, particularly relevant to northern Tasmania, remained in the Launceston library, under the overall management of the State Library of Tasmania.¹⁹⁵

interviews with Ken Gilmore', digital audio copy of original television interviews c. 1974, Brian Rieusset, Hobart, 2006; and WELH Crowther, 'Notes and final draft of a paper on book collecting, notably the formation of his own collection', Crowther pamphlets, SLT, Hobart.

¹⁹¹ See Marshall, 'The State Library of Tasmania's heritage collections'.

¹⁹² Crowther, 'Notes and final draft of a paper on book collecting'. The co-incidence of William Walker sharing the same surname (but no actual familial connection) with the more famous James Backhouse Walker has led to some instances of the mistaken fusion of the activities of the two men. For example, in his study of the history of Hobart, written in 1973, Peter Bolger mistakenly credited JB Walker with the establishment of the Australiana collection at the public library, noting that 'from a buying agent in Britain, and from [William] Westcott, J. B. Walker began to gather the library which eventually formed the basis of the colony's treasured collection of books on Tasmanian history': PF Bolger, *Hobart Town*, Canberra, 1973, p. 188.

¹⁹³ J Hollingsworth, 'The Local Studies Library in Launceston', *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 4, no. 1, 1993, p. 51.

¹⁹⁴ Petrow, *Going to the mechanics*, p. 138; Binns, *Library services in Tasmania*.

¹⁹⁵ In early 2009 the Launceston Local Studies Library was absorbed into the Tasmanian Archives and Heritage Office, as part of the 'Community Knowledge Network' strategy (see below): Tony Marshall, email correspondence to the author, 4 May 2010.

In the 1970s and 1980s there was a ‘dramatic upsurge in genealogical enquiries’ due to the emerging fascination with genealogy and local history (a nation-wide phenomenon, as Graeme Davison has found¹⁹⁶), which exacerbated accommodation problems of the growing collection.¹⁹⁷ When librarian Tony Marshall came to the State Library of Tasmania in 1990 as Manager of Tasmaniana Services, he was ‘both delighted and concerned’ by what he found in the historical collections.¹⁹⁸ The delights related to the depth and richness of the collections and the knowledge and commitment of the staff. Concerns included the lack of appropriate arrangement and description of the collections, the poor ‘physical and administrative arrangements in the State Library’, and the fact that some of the documentary collections, specifically nineteenth-century newspapers, were split across other parts of the organisation (such as the Serials Collection) or in the Archives Office.¹⁹⁹ Under-use of the collection was also a great concern, and the fact it was a ‘largely unknown resource’. In 1993 Marshall noted that the ‘Tasmaniana Library was, and remains, hidden away at the end of a long daunting and dark corridor (which, at least, has recently been well-lit)’.²⁰⁰ A major refurbishment in 1998 remedied these problems.²⁰¹

In 2006 the Tasmanian State Government launched a new initiative entitled ‘Community Knowledge Network: libraries, online access centres, adult education and archives working together’. This strategy aimed to forge stronger links between the four identified areas of information provision to provide a ‘larger resource base’ for ‘lifelong learning’ in Tasmania.²⁰² Arguing that ‘Tasmania’s cultural memory and documentary record are becoming increasingly important to our Tasmanian identity’, the initiative re-integrated the activities of

¹⁹⁶ See Davison, *The use and abuse of Australian history*, esp. Ch. 5, ‘Ancestors: the broken lineage of family history’, pp. 80-109.

¹⁹⁷ L Brown, ‘A decade in the State Library of Tasmania’, *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol. 1, no. 3, 1988, p. 165.

¹⁹⁸ Marshall, ‘The State Library of Tasmania’s heritage collections’, p. 53.

¹⁹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁰¹ Tony Marshall, email correspondence to the author, 30 April 2010.

²⁰² See Department of Education, Tasmania, ‘Community Knowledge Network: libraries, online access centres, adult education and archives working together’, 31 October 2006, available online: <http://www.education.tas.gov.au/dept/strategies/communityknowledgenetwork.DOC>, accessed 1 May 2010.

the Heritage Services of the State Library of Tasmania and the Archives Office of Tasmania under the description 'Tasmania's cultural memory'.²⁰³ The broader mandate for the State Library was to provide Tasmanians with 'easy and integrated access to their documentary heritage and the knowledge it contains about our past, present and possible future'.²⁰⁴ Digital access was also central to the initiative, 'so researchers worldwide will be able to obtain digital copies of its unique collections immediately', contributing in this way to 'the national and international body of knowledge'.²⁰⁵ The strategy has been implemented, with the combined resources opened to the public in the Murray Street building of the State Library of Tasmania in 2008 as the 'Tasmanian Archive and Heritage Office'.²⁰⁶ The heritage collections feature prominently on the library's website under the heading 'Tasmania's memory'.²⁰⁷

Libraries and 'heritage' in recent decades

The 1960s and 1970s saw a renewed interest in Australian history across the nation, reflected in an upsurge of popular interest in local history, increased tertiary history courses and historical scholarship, and a sharp increase in the monetary value of Australian manuscripts, pictures and books. New archival depositories for private and governmental papers were created in Australia's universities.²⁰⁸ Interest in local history collections in the municipal public libraries in Australia also emerged strongly for the first time.²⁰⁹ In 1963 a workshop for Victorian librarians was held entitled *Local history and the library*, in which the poverty (or complete absence) of local history collections in Victoria's public libraries was the subject of discussion. JL Hobbs' *Local history and the library*

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ Ibid.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.

²⁰⁶ Tony Marshall, email correspondence to the author, 4 May 2010.

²⁰⁷ See 'State Library of Tasmania', <http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/>, accessed 5 February 2010.

²⁰⁸ Thompson, 'The Australian manuscripts collection in the State Library of Victoria', p. 13.

²⁰⁹ For more detailed descriptions of this development, see G Pearson, 'The development and role of local history collections in Australian public libraries', *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol. 1, no. 1, 1988, pp. 28-36; M Dewe, 'Local studies libraries and librarianship in Australia', *The Local Studies Librarian*, vol. 12, no. 1, 1993, pp. 2-7; M Wyatt, 'A local studies experience: applying British principles to Australian conditions', *The Local Studies Librarian*, vol. 8, no. 1, 1989, pp. 3-6; and A Gregg, 'Our heritage: the role of archives and local studies collections', *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol. 15, no. 3, 2002, pp. 126-32.

(London, 1962) prompted a new address to the topic, the British librarian's 'firm belief in the importance of public libraries having strong, well organised local history sections' offering Australian librarians a 'philosophy and a high principled ideation which might well provide inspiration for our present puny efforts', in the words of conference delegate Austin McCallum.²¹⁰ Leslie Blake spoke at the conference of the 'importance of educating the public to conserve items of local history and of the urgent need to create a public awareness and interest in the subject'.²¹¹

In 1976 the report on public libraries in Australia undertaken by Allan Roy Horton (known as the 'Horton Report') recommended that all Australian public libraries, including small regional and metropolitan libraries, should create local history collections.²¹² The Library Association of Australia indicated in its 'Policy and planning guidelines' for public libraries 1984 that the public library had a 'responsibility to ensure that information about the history of the local community is collected, retained and made available'.²¹³ By 1999, Alan Bundy, former university librarian at the University of South Australia, was able to write that '[f]rom the increasing literature, policy statements, conferences, workshops and surveys during the 1980s and 1990s there has been increasing consideration by Australian public libraries of their role in preserving and providing access to Australia's documentary heritage through local studies collections'.²¹⁴ Some 57.5 per cent of Australian public libraries, amounting to 307 services, reported having local studies collections at the end of the twentieth century.²¹⁵

²¹⁰ A McCallum, 'Collecting local history in the Victorian area', in *Local history and the library: papers of a workshop held at Ballarat, June 29-30, 1963*, Melbourne, 1964, pp. 35-40.

²¹¹ L Blake, 'Collecting local history', in *Local history and the library*, p. 41.

²¹² Dewe, 'Local studies libraries and librarianship in Australia', p. 2. Gillian Pearson considered in 1988 that the development of local history collections in Australian libraries since the 1970s had been 'a natural part of the evolution of Australian public libraries in the Anglo American tradition', despite the influence of Hobbs in the 1960s: Pearson, 'The development and role of local history collections', p. 29.

²¹³ Quoted in Pearson, 'The development and role of local history collections', p. 30.

²¹⁴ A Bundy, 'Local studies in Australian public libraries: progress and potential', *Australasian Public Libraries and Information Services*, vol. 12, no. 4, 1999, p. 168.

²¹⁵ Ibid.

As this chapter has shown, a distinct shift in attitudes to collection and retention of the local and national archive had occurred across the major public library sector in Australia, from the major state libraries to the smaller municipal libraries, over the course of a century. The major state and national reference libraries were now firmly national cultural ‘heritage’ institutions. The accumulation and transmission of local and national culture had become intrinsic to their operation, to their identities, and (in a society increasingly valuing ‘heritage’, genealogy, local history and social history and ‘national’ stories) their public and political success. As Chris Healy has noted, ‘most cultural institutions articulate inherited customs and beliefs through a sense of heritage, which, in turn, certifies their authenticity and legitimacy’.²¹⁶ The ‘reverence for the authority of the word’,²¹⁷ which marked the new scientific history from the late nineteenth century, helped to create and legitimate the public libraries’ new role for a new nation. By the end of the twentieth-century Australian libraries, particularly the state libraries, had fully embraced this role, housing — as the Mitchell Library declared in 2000 — the ‘documentary record’ of the nation’s ‘cultural heritage’,²¹⁸ as one way to maintain their legitimacy and relevance to society’s needs.

Conclusion

Contemplating this apparent *fait accompli* of the naturalisation of the public library as an archive of nation and region, some scholars have recently begun to challenge the ‘commonsense-ness’ of the archival activity of the institution, alert to the ‘slipperiness’ of the library collection when viewed as a heritage totality. ‘Heritage’ in the Australian public library is the reification of history in individual books and whole collections. Australiana collections represent the ultimate reified past, in the context of nationalism and patriotism. However, as eminent historian Stuart Macintyre observes:

... [cultural heritage] links the cultural consumer to an authorised past, and processes that past by assembling artefacts that authorise the

²¹⁶ C Healy, *Forgetting Aborigines*, Sydney, 2008, p. 101.

²¹⁷ T Griffiths, ‘Social history and deep time’, *Tasmanian Historical Studies*, vol. 7, 2000, p. 27.

²¹⁸ State Library of New South Wales, *Celebrating 100 years of the Mitchell Library*, promotional abstract, Edgecliff, NSW, 2000.

identities they construct. The library is a large, cumulative institution that does not easily answer to such expectations.²¹⁹

This chapter has traced the consolidation of ways of gathering, managing and promoting the local and national past in the public library in the twentieth century. However, Macintyre's observation reminds us that the past that has been constructed is contingent and complex. This is because, as this thesis has shown, the evolution of the will to archive is continually tempered by large-scale social and cultural factors that range from cultural nationalism, to cultural cringe; or from the desire to discover the past, to the desire to forget it. Collections are formed by legal deposit, by deliberate purchase, by major collection philanthropy and by small-scale book donation. As such they articulate a perception of identity that bears an overall imprint 'Australian', yet is nuanced by regional, local and individual experiences of that identity.

The awareness of the historical contingency of the 'will to archive' has value for illuminating present practices. Annemaree Lloyd has recently called scholarly attention to the need to analyse the contemporary process of selecting the documents and textual artefacts that will constitute our preserved cultural heritage.²²⁰ Lloyd examines the process of designating 'significance' for potential acquisitions, in particular, finding that it is complex, fluid and always political.²²¹ Designation of significance, Lloyd argues, is an area of 'tension and contestation', both reflecting and reinforcing power relations.²²² In the literature of contemporary librarianship Lloyd finds 'little evidence' that the concept of significance, its relativity, and the 'impact of its designation' have received much critical attention. As Lloyd notes, the powerful position that public libraries play

²¹⁹ S Macintyre, 'What about the books?', *La Trobe Library Journal*, vol. 14, no. 55, 1995, p. 7.

²²⁰ A Lloyd, 'Guarding against collective amnesia? Making significance problematic: an exploration of issues', *Library Trends*, vol. 56, no. 1, 2007, p. 54.

²²¹ R Harvey, A Lloyd and D Lodge, 'Lost and missing Australian documentary heritage: is there any? UNESCO Memory of the World (MOTW) Program and its local version Australian Memory of the World', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 54, no. 3, 2005, p. 294.

²²² Lloyd, 'Guarding against collective amnesia', p. 53.

as 'keepers of cultural truth, shapers of memory and guardians of sanctioned knowledge' is 'often downplayed'.²²³

Michael Piggott has also challenged the naturalised role of the archive, focusing on the increasing evocation of the notion of memory as a descriptor for cultural heritage. Piggott notes, in the context of archives and archival practice, that the term 'memory' is used over-confidently and over-frequently as a 'classic definition' of their role.²²⁴ Piggott finds that most public heritage institutions (including archives, museums and libraries) cannot resist the 'memory analogy', which tends to be 'overstated'.²²⁵ He illustrates this by noting that in 2000 the State Library of Victoria equated its collections of 'documentary and published heritage' with 'our social memories', and the National Library of Australia 'styled itself as "a place which nourishes the nation's memory"' in its document *Directions for 2000-2002*.²²⁶ (It is perhaps significant that the most recent National Library strategic plan, *Directions 2009-2011*, does not use a memory analogy, which suggests that Piggott's contention was addressed.²²⁷) The State Library of Tasmania, as noted above, has also recently adopted the memory analogy, providing a shorthand for the 'Heritage Services and Collections' on its library website with the term 'Tasmania's memory' (<http://www.statelibrary.tas.gov.au/tasmemory>), as has the State Library of South Australia in 'SA Memory South Australia: past and present, for the future' (<http://www.samemory.sa.gov.au/site/page.cfm>).

²²³ Lloyd, 'Guarding against collective amnesia?', pp. 54-55.

²²⁴ M Piggott, 'Archives and memory', in SM McKemmish (ed.), *Archives: recordkeeping in society*, Wagga Wagga, NSW, 2005, pp. 298, 300-301. This terminology can be seen in the 'Memory of the World' project launched in 1992 by the United Nations Educational Scientific and Cultural Organization. In this project, designed to 'protect and promote the world's documentary heritage through preservation and access', documentary heritage was conceived as being 'the mirror of the world and its memory': R Harvey, 'UNESCO's Memory of the World Programme and Australia's lost and missing documentary heritage', *Australian Library Journal*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2003, p. 136.

²²⁵ Piggott, 'Archives and memory', p. 308, 304.

²²⁶ Piggott, 'Archives and memory', p. 308.

²²⁷ *Directions 2009-2011*, National Library of Australia, <http://www.nla.gov.au/library/directions.html>, accessed 10 February 2010.

Piggott argues that the memory/archive analogy is ‘dangerously out of step with postmodern approaches across all archival functions and conceptions of archival science, at its worst resulting in a context of record creation that is too narrowly defined and a role for the archivist that is too idealistic’.²²⁸ Do archives facilitate or enable memory making, and how does this differ from their role as a resource for historical scholarship and production (which is in turn ‘often critical to collective memory-making’)?²²⁹ Should archives exploit this perception of an ‘exclusive or central role’ in memory-making in institutions and in society, particularly when most social memory is never captured in forms that can be collected and conserved? Although Piggott’s concerns relate directly to the contemporary formation of discrete archives, they also have implications for the public libraries that continue to function as archival collections and to draw on current confluences of history and memory, and the evocation of ‘heritage’.²³⁰

The danger in articulating a totalising notion of the heritage culture of the public library in the present is that it assumes an attainment of a coherent worldview and historical perspective. Although nationalising and patriotic impetuses encouraged public librarians — and patriotic philanthropists — to seek the comprehensive archive of Australia from the Federation period onward, this ‘will to archive’ did not necessarily produce internally coherent or reliably representative collections. In addition, even as this thesis has demonstrated the progressive consolidation of a vision for the public library as a vehicle for ‘local’ histories and fictions, it acknowledges the presence of multiple concurrent discourses (including those of class, gender or race) in library collections and practices. This conclusion is suggestive of the many alternative directions in which the history of the Australian public library may be explored.

²²⁸ Piggott, ‘Archives and memory’, p. 309.

²²⁹ Piggott, ‘Archives and memory’, p. 307.

²³⁰ Piggott suggests that ‘[h]ow archives support memory *differently* from library and museum materials awaits sustained analysis, but the need is all the more urgent because our cultural roles partially overlap, each support research and other use, each offers outreach and public programs, and libraries so often manage archival collections’: Piggott, ‘Archives and memory’, p. 309.

CONCLUSION

Summary of findings

This thesis has examined aspects of identity formation in the public library through two principal types of collection relating to Australia and its regions: material relating to history, and creative literature. These have been closely associated with evolving nationalism and patriotism in a young nation. The period under examination was one in which redemptive, scientific, and nationalising history-making was increasingly the currency of historical consciousness across the western world, from individual/local/genealogical history-making, to the political formation of national archives and national collections in the practical and memorial construction of nation.¹ History at this time evolved from a practice founded on 'rhetoric and persuasion' to one of 'detachment and documentation'.² The engagement in the colonies with this particular idea of history had a powerful influence on attitudes toward the acquisition of the local and national archive.

As the early chapters of the thesis have shown, there was a relative absence of history in the Australian 'state' libraries in the nineteenth century, certainly in comparison to British models. Emerging interest in local history prompted a new will to archive in the major public libraries at the end of the nineteenth century, while growing nationalism and patriotism associated with Federation gave new impetus to this activity in the early twentieth century. Later chapters demonstrated how the public library came to play a foundational, and increasingly important, role in the 'materialisation' of history through the acquisition and promotion of historical documents. By forming an archive of the locality, and (increasingly) promoting this material to support certain foundational and celebratory narratives of possession and progress, libraries contributed to an 'agreed meaning' on the past within the wider public historical sphere, and to a developing worldview for an emerging national society.

¹ Peter Fritzsche refers to this as the 'busy work of heirs': P Fritzsche, *Stranded in the present: modern time and the melancholy of history*, Cambridge, Mass., 2004, p. 209.

² T Dalziell, 'No place for a book? Fiction in Australia to 1890', in P Pierce (ed.), *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, Port Melbourne, Vic., 2009, pp. 102-103.

By the second half of the twentieth century, all the Australian state libraries had naturalised a 'heritage' function, actively seeking to enrich their local and national 'archives' as a core activity. However, in what Chris Healy has called the 'uneasy interdependence of history and memory',³ the role of the library in social constructions of cultural memory was neither simple, nor uncontested. As Chapter 5 has argued, the 'will to archive' was tempered by inflections and hiatus, the penal past in particular influencing the formation of public library collections over a number of generations. The close analysis of the life cycle of Henry Savery's *The Hermit in Van Diemen's Land* has provided a focused view of this effect.

In addressing the relationship between the Australian public library and national creative literature, the thesis has demonstrated that the public library engaged productively with locally produced fictions, although this role was neither clearly articulated nor substantiated until the 1930s. This thesis has argued that this was due to the long-standing resistance in the international library profession to popular creative literature, as well as the local problematics of 'cultural cringe'. The cultural struggle around the popularisation of the public library, which came to a head internationally over 'the great fiction debate', had an extra complexity when mixed with local perceptions of cultural inferiority of Australian literature. Even when the acquisition and preservation of non-fictional material had been established as a significant part of 'national' library function at the beginning of the twentieth century, these concerns relating to fiction acted against the Australian public library adopting a more active role in acquiring and promoting national fictions.

Library philanthropy has emerged in the thesis as a powerful force for cultural change and adaptation in the Australian public library. This has been explored in detail in relation to the Tasmanian Public Library. In this library, philanthropy has been a pervasive aspect of this specific history, ranging from the large-scale building donation of Andrew Carnegie and the major Australiana collection

³ C Healy, *From the ruins of colonialism: history as social memory*, Cambridge; Melbourne, 1997, p. 74.

donation of William Walker, to the ‘everyday’ practices of small-scale book donations. The examination of library philanthropy has revealed the substantial degree to which individuals outside the organisational management of the public library influenced the evolution of a heritage role of the institution, through donations that reflected and promoted the locality and the nation. This thesis has characterised this activity in terms of ‘patriotic philanthropy’ — a trend emerging during the Federation period, and indicating a shift from nineteenth-century ‘moral’ philanthropy.

Avenues for future research

The research undertaken for this thesis suggests a number of fruitful courses for future investigation. The limitation within this thesis of examining the effects of nationalism, history and memory in *Australian* public libraries could be usefully expanded through a study of transnational trends in the ‘will to archive’. The differences between the take-up and development of public libraries in New Zealand and Australia, seen for example in the far greater number of Andrew Carnegie building grants issued in New Zealand than in Australia, alert the historian to a rich field of comparative study of attitudes to history, archives and collections in nations that are geographically close, yet divergent. The growing body of scholarship that addresses transnational information networks and relationships, including that of Tony Ballantyne, Carolyn Hamilton and Ann Laura Stoler,⁴ raises questions about the construction of archives in colonies, and the enforced relocation of local archives to the metropole, examining (among other things) how institutions at the imperial centre ‘aggregate to themselves the power to define and delimit the archive’.⁵ Ballantyne urges historians to become ‘more sensitive to the interplay between the local, the national and imperial’, ‘to

⁴ See T Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race: Aryanism in the British Empire*, Basingstoke, 2002; T Ballantyne, ‘Mr. Peal’s archive: mobility and exchange in histories of empire’, in AM Burton (ed.), *Archive stories: facts, fictions, and the writing of history*, Durham, NC, 2005, pp. 87-110; the edited collection C Hamilton, et al. (eds.), *Refiguring the archive*, Dordrecht; London, 2002; AL Stoler, ‘Colonial archives and the arts of governance’, in FX Blouin and WG Rosenberg (eds.), *Archives, documentation, and institutions of social memory: essays from the Sawyer Seminar*, Ann Arbor, Mich., 2006, pp. 267-79; and AL Stoler, *Along the archival grain: epistemic anxieties and colonial common sense*, Princeton, NJ; Oxford, 2009.

⁵ C Hamilton, V Harris and G Reid, ‘Introduction’, in C Hamilton et al. (eds.), *Refiguring the archive*, Dordrecht; London, 2002, p. 17.

recover the transnational cultural movements which were so central in the constitution of empires'.⁶ Future research could fruitfully analyse the kinds of boundaries and constructions of identity that these imperial archives enforce, in the Australian colonial context.

This thesis has addressed the representation and promotion of large-scale (national and regional) identities reflecting majorities, in the creation of a cultural unity that saw itself as 'Australian'. The corollary of this is an examination of the public library's representation of minorities. Future work must assess the history of Aboriginal culture in the Australian public library. What was the periodisation of its acquisition and promotion? What was the public library's role in what anthropologist WEH Stanner has called the 'cult of disremembering' and the 'silence on all matters aboriginal' in Australian culture up to the 1970s?⁷ 'One wonders what future historians and anthropologists will think of our neglect to preserve adequate records of our own Australian aborigines', librarian Kenneth Binns wrote perceptively in 1948, in a descriptive summary of the collections of the National Library of Australia.⁸ An investigation into these silences and presences in the archive of the Australian public library could greatly enrich our understandings of settler anxieties related to 'exile and doubtful tenure' (in Robert Dixon's words⁹) in the colonial and early post-colonial periods.

This thesis has also touched upon a comparison of the role of public museums and public libraries, in the ways in which these institutions promoted particular historical narratives and contributed to developing historical consciousness in communities. Further scholarship in this area would be productive. While both public institutions act as storehouses of 'heritage', there is a stronger public perception of the museum as a place in which stories of history are interpreted and legitimised. As Amiria Henare has noted, 'museums have a peculiar authority in

⁶ Ballantyne, *Orientalism and race*, p. 14.

⁷ WEH Stanner, 'The great Australian silence', in *After the dreaming; black and white Australians — an anthropologist's view [The Boyer Lectures, 1968]*, Sydney, 1969, pp. 24-25.

⁸ K Binns, 'The Commonwealth National Library', in CL Barrett, *Across the years: the lure of early Australian books*, Melbourne, 1948, p. 24.

⁹ R Dixon, 'Introduction', in Pierce, *The Cambridge history of Australian literature*, p. 2.

that they are seen to provide official versions of history, derived from academia and often sanctioned by the state'.¹⁰ Libraries do not have the same degree of exhibitionary authority: as GK Peatling has observed, it can be argued that the propagation of 'official' narratives such as nationalism in the public library is attenuated by the degree of autonomy exerted by library patrons in their book selection and individual reading experiences.¹¹ Possibly because of the greater difficulty in analysing a 'library visit' than a 'museum visit', there is little literature that attempts to theorise this aspect of the public library's place in culture and society. An example of a focused study that immediately suggests itself is a comparison of the social and cultural effects of the different types of collections formed by the bibliophile William Walker and the antiquarian James Watt Beattie, and the uses to which their collections were put in the institutional sphere (in the Tasmanian Public Library and the Tasmanian Museum and Art Gallery, respectively). How was the impact of Walker's literature in the public library different to, or more or less powerful than, that of the Beattie's artefacts in the public museum, in the short and longer term?

The excitement of discovery — of new sources for personal, local and national histories, of forgotten Australian fictions, of shared histories — permeates reading practices relating to collections of Australiana formed by the state libraries over the past century. The growing scholarship on readers and reading suggests a further extension of the findings of this thesis.¹² A wider and more exhaustive search for sources of information about the types of reading experiences in local and national collections could produce an engrossing picture of the various uses

¹⁰ AJM Henare, *Museums, anthropology and imperial exchange*, Cambridge, UK; New York, 2005, p. 11.

¹¹ GK Peatling, 'Public libraries and national identity in Britain, 1850-1919', *Library History*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2004, p. 36.

¹² Excellent foundational studies include M Lyons and L Taksa, *Australian readers remember: an oral history of reading 1890-1930*, Melbourne, 1992; M Askew and B Hubber, 'The colonial reader observed: reading in its cultural context', in DH Borchardt and W Kirsop (eds.), *The Book in Australia: essays towards a cultural & social history*, Melbourne, 1988, pp. 110-37; E Webby, 'Not reading the nation: Australian readers of the 1890s', *Australian Literary Studies*, vol. 22, no. 3, 2006, pp. 308-18; and M Lyons, 'Reading practices in Australia', in M Lyons and J Arnold (eds.), *A history of the book in Australia 1891-1945: a national culture in a colonised market*, St Lucia, Qld, 2001, pp. 335-54, among others.

(genealogical, historiographical, or leisure/pleasure-orientated) to which the local archive was put.

Conclusion

Awareness of the mutability of cultural preferences relating to artefactual collections alerts the library historian to the complex stratification of public library archives, and also the potential of a sensitive excavation of these formative layers to reveal complexities of social agency and cultural affect at work through time. As anthropologist James Clifford has written:

While the object systems of art and anthropology are institutionalized and powerful, they are not immutable. The categories of the beautiful, the cultural and the authentic have changed and are changing. Thus it is important to resist the tendency of collections to be self-sufficient, to suppress their own historical, economic and political processes of production.¹³

Clifford's observation that cultural collections should be self-reflexive, revealing the processes and politics of their immediate production as well as the historicity of the artefacts, speaks directly to recent scholarly interest in the epistemological foundations of the archive.

In this thesis, Australia's principal libraries of reference and deposit have been conceptualised as palimpsests of evolving cultural attitudes to nation, region and self. They have been approached as sites in which signs of cultural adaptation and naturalisation — relating to the 'performance' of Britishness and evolving 'performances' of Australianness — are immanent.¹⁴ The periodisation of the 'will to archive' has offered important insights into the ways in which Australians evolved their understanding of nation, through national literary culture and

¹³ J Clifford, 'Collecting ourselves', in SM Pearce (ed.), *Interpreting objects and collections* London; New York, 1994, p. 266.

¹⁴ G Dening, *Performances*, Carlton, Vic., 1996, esp. pp. 35-63. Darian-Smith, Macintyre and Grimshaw have noted that 'British people who defended, mapped, visited, governed, settled, populated, missionised and made their fortunes in foreign lands, performed Britishness in diverse ways', communicating their 'sense of Britishness' 'so volubly in action, speech and print': K Darian-Smith, P Grimshaw and S Macintyre, *Britishness abroad: transnational movements and imperial cultures*, Carlton, Vic., 2007, p. 14.

national history, through shared/collective memories, documents and published texts. The thesis has shown how a diversity of social and cultural factors have contributed to the acquisition and preservation of literary culture and documentary 'heritage' in public library collections; how agreement is formed and nurtured relating to what collections are considered appropriate to articulate a sense of shared heritage; and how these factors both reflect and shift wider hegemonic structures. In forming the 'collective subject' (a national or regional identity) within the archive, the public library has been shown to have actively participated in the production of identity, in the wider, ongoing, social construction of an Australian literary and historical 'common past'.

The historicisation of library collections has underpinned this thesis project. The thesis has demonstrated how the apparently disinterested project of forming the local and national archive is itself (to paraphrase Didier Maleuvre¹⁵) an 'historical gesture'. It takes place in history, passes judgment on history, and grants cultural legitimacy to those literary and historical artefacts that are collected, conserved and promoted. An understanding of this process makes us more alert to the relativity of decisions about 'significance', relating to the purposeful acquisition, conservation and promotion of 'local' collections, and to the complexities of the contemporary role of the public library as cultural archive.

¹⁵ D Maleuvre, *Museum memories: history, technology, art*, Stanford, Calif., 1999, p. 12.

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